

AMERICAN SURVIVAL GUIDE READERS -- SEE PAGE 6

# Backwoods



# Home magazine

Sept/Oct 2001

No. 71

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*practical ideas for self-reliant living*

## ***Freedom, guns, & boycotts***

Safe water supply

Earth sheltered homes

Build a chicken coop

Caribbean cooking

Four by four living

Your own log home



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**Backwoods Home Magazine** is written for people who have a desire to pursue personal independence, self sufficiency, and their dreams. It offers "how to" articles on owner-built housing, independent energy, gardening, health, self-employment, country living, and other topics related to an independent and self-reliant lifestyle.

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## ABOUT THE COVER

The cover for this issue is a painting by the artist Don Childers. It's a buck under the autumn foliage as he's about to cross a small stream. We thought we'd be able to think of something interesting to say about the picture, but after Dave and I sat around the office for awhile trying to think of something snazzy to say, we finally admitted we couldn't come up with anything. Finally, Dave said, "Why don't we just tell people we liked it? And that's really the reason we chose it as this issue's cover."

Live with it.



## FEATURES

### Independent energy

#### 8 Water: a safe supply when you're off the grid By Jeffrey Yago

Securing a safe supply of potable water can be one of the things that confounds a move to the country. This is all the more difficult when you live off the grid. Jeffrey Yago explains how he designed and installed a water system in the remote mountains of Idaho to efficiently and effectively provide safe water.



### Self-sufficiency

#### 14 Living the outlaw life: Beware the Great Guru of Freedom By Claire Wolfe

Freedom lovers, like the rest of overburdened humanity, often look for simple solutions to complex problems. Claire Wolfe tells us there are steps we can take, but warns against succumbing to the ubiquitous self-styled gurus who dispense bad advice, take our money, and can even land us in jail.

#### 42 Tips and handy hints for 4X4 living By Jackie Clay

There are several things you should consider when selecting a 4X4 for backwoods living, and Jackie Clay guides us through the options.



### Farm and garden

#### 35 The good life starts with your garden By Alice Yeager

If you are looking to move to the backwoods for a life of self-sufficiency, the search should start with an eye as to what kind of ground you're moving onto. Alice Yeager lets us in on a little secret on what to look for — garden strips.



### Building and tools

#### 27 Build your own log home in the woods: part 2 By Jackie Clay

In this, the second installment of Jackie Clay's three-part series on building your own log home, she tells us how to put in the footings and floor, how to make provisions for electricity and water, how to "lay up the logs" while making room for windows, doors, fireplaces, and chimneys, how to plan for a loft or a second floor, and how to begin your roof.

#### 39 This coop is for the birds: Mattie Sue, Splatty-Goo, and Fu-man-choo By Dorothy Ainsworth

Chickens are low-maintenance pets, inexpensive to feed, and they give back that little prize every day. All they ask for in return is a light and airy shelter, kept clean and dry and safe, and Dorothy Ainsworth tells you how to build them one.



#### 70 Earth-sheltered homes and structures By Ruthanne and Marty Davis

Imagine a home where heating and cooling bills are low and changes in the outdoor temperature do not alter indoor temperatures by more than a few degrees, even in the coldest environments. These are just a few of the advantages you have when you live in an earth-sheltered home.



### Country Living

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## Publisher's Note

***American Survival Guide*** readers glad to be part of the *BHM* family

This is the second issue being sent to the nearly 20,000 subscribers of *American Survival Guide*, which went out of business a couple of months ago. For those of you who haven't heard, *BHM* is fulfilling the remaining issues of *ASG* subscriptions for up to six issues. For *ASG* subscribers who have only one or two issues remaining on your *ASG* subscription, you'll only get one or two issues of *BHM*. We paid Y Visionary, the parent company of the former *ASG*, one dollar for the privilege of fulfilling *ASG* subscriptions, but the liability for *BHM* will total approximately \$60,000, which includes the cost of printing and mailing *BHM* issues to *ASG* subscribers.

So far things are working out well for both of us, as you can see by the letters from *ASG* subscribers beginning on page 79 of this issue. *BHM* subscribers and the former *ASG* subscribers are very similar. It is a near perfect match. For years we had advertised in *ASG* hoping to win over subscribers; now we can show the product to you firsthand to show we are as good as we said.

*Backwoods Home Magazine* has writers *ASG* could only dream about: Massad Ayoob, John Silveira, Claire Wolfe, Richard Blunt, Dave Duffy, and many others—all versed in their field, all good writers. Read them in this issue and at our huge website at [www.backwoodshome.com](http://www.backwoodshome.com).

You join 19,000 *BHM* subscribers, 25,000 *BHM* newsstand buyers, and more than 90,000 *BHM* website ([www.backwoodshome.com](http://www.backwoodshome.com)) readers who enjoy the magazine. The free premiums in the ad on page 3 of this issue make the present time a good time to subscribe to *BHM* or



**Windy Dankoff, maker of the famed Dankoff water pumps, and Dave Duffy. Windy was one of many energy pioneers at the MREF.**



**Jd Belanger, publisher of *Countryside* and *Small Stock Journal*, and Dave Duffy, publisher of *Backwoods Home Magazine*, meet at the Midwest Renewable Energy Fair.**

to renew an existing subscription.

### Midwest Renewable Energy Fair

Between issues I took my family on a 9700-mile, 25-state tour of America and found the country as wonderful as it was 36 years ago, when John Silveira, *BHM*'s senior editor, and I hitchhiked 9100 miles across America. The main difference was that this time I slept in motels and in campgrounds, instead of under bridges and on picnic tables as John and I did as 21-year-olds. The country was also more crowded, but we went through dozens of small towns in the middle of nowhere that looked like fine places to raise a family, free of city traffic and crime.

One of our most exciting stops was in Amherst, Wisconsin, at the Midwest Renewable Energy Fair. We camped next to the Fair for three days and met subscribers and others at our booth at the Fair. The Fair set an Amherst attendance record, thanks in large part to the hundreds of *BHM* subscribers who attended.

The Fair was a great meeting ground of left and right, with camo-clad conservatives rubbing shoulders with environmentalists, talking about things they had in common—energy. Lots of informative energy workshops, a nightly outdoor dance with a band for exhibitors, and good microbrew. There were a few ruffled feathers among some who took exception to *BHM*'s tough energy editorial in Issue No. 69, and our uncompromising stand on gun ownership, but nothing that can't be worked out. The achievement of alternative energies that are clean and affordable is a great goal that should be pursued by us all. *BHM* likes to call it independent energy because it makes us more independent, but we are on common ground with those environmentalists who prefer to call it alternative or renewable energy. It's good for us both. Δ



# My view

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## Freedom, guns, & boycotts

The other day I walked into my local Ace Hardware store and cancelled this magazine's longstanding account.

"How come?" Dan, the owner asked surprised. I had shopped there ever since the company moved to Gold Beach, Oregon three years ago and knew everyone first-hand.

"Ace is using Rosie O'Donnell to help sell their products," I said. "And Rosie O'Donnell wants to put me in jail because I own a gun."

"But we're apolitical," he said. "We have nothing to do with that."

"You have the Ace Hardware sign on your door," I said, "which means you benefit from their advertising."

"But we're a family-owned business, Dave, you know that," he protested.

I felt very bad at that moment. His business was similar to mine: just a few employees, family members working hard to keep things going. They relied on every account in this small town. But I knew I had to make a statement at the local level in defense of the *Second Amendment*, which guarantees individuals like me the right to have a gun.

Rosie O'Donnell's statement when she was a spokesperson for K-Mart in 1999 was foremost in my mind: "I don't care if you think it's your right," she said, "I say: Sorry, it's 1999. We have had enough as a nation. You are not allowed to own a gun, and if you do own a gun I think you should go to prison."

I and tens of thousands of other gun owners—just a fraction of the 80 million Americans who own guns—boycotted K-Mart, and the company subsequently dumped Rosie as a spokesperson. Now Rosie's photo was displayed prominently on Ace Hardware's Internet website under the headline: "Paint Your House 'Rosie' with Ace Paint."

Outraged e-mail suggested a boycott of Ace for their support of someone who wanted to put us gun owners in prison, and I agreed. But the boycott was more personal this time. There had been no K-Mart in Gold Beach, but my neighbor, Dan, owned the local Ace Hardware.

"It's going to be costly for me too," I told Dan. "You're the only good hardware store in town. But there comes a time when a person has to take a step in the direction of freedom. Rosie O'Donnell wants to put me in jail, and Ace Hardware supports her. I have no choice but to fight back in the only tangible way I can—by boycotting Ace Hardware and anything connected with Ace and Rosie O'Donnell."

The owner, not understanding, waved his hand at me angrily and walked away in a huff.

Less than two days later, alarmed by the thousands of people like me who had taken similar action, Ace distanced itself from Rosie O'Donnell, closing the offending page on its website and sending out e-mails and letters to angry customers like me stating: "Ace Hardware has not and does not employ Rosie O'Donnell as a spokesperson, nor do we have any official relationship or affiliation with her."

The boycott had taken two days, and I reopened my Ace Hardware account. "It was all a mistake," said the grateful Dan. "Rosie wasn't really acting as an Ace spokeswoman."

I relate this incident because it illustrates a critical lesson for all of us who support the *U.S. Constitution* and its *Amendments*, including and especially the *Second Amendment*. The power of economic boycott is a big weapon at our disposal. We no longer have to roll over and play dead every time some misguided but influential gun grabber like Rosie O'Donnell tries to take away our rights. In the face of the mass media eagerly reporting her every word while portraying gun owners as villains, we can fight back, quietly but with tremendous effect, by means of the economic boycott.

And let's not forget Smith and Wesson, the gun maker brought to its knees by the economic boycott of gun owners after S&W made a sell-out deal with the federal government to protect its hide from lawsuits. So outraged were gun owners with S&W that they have been slow to forgive, and S&W will likely not recover from the loss of financial revenue.

People like Rosie O'Donnell have been given a free ride when they try to strip us of our rights. That is a recipe for disaster for gun owners. It's not enough that we contribute money to organizations like the NRA and GOA so that they can fight the Congressional battles for us. We must take to the streets ourselves in forms like the economic boycott to make Rosie and the companies that support her pay. If it means crippling them like we have done to S&W, so be it. Remember, she wants to put us in prison because we exercise a Constitutional right.

Rosie O'Donnell just launched a national magazine called *Rosie*. In it she is unapologetic about her stance to imprison gun owners like you and me. In her page 2 "from rosie" column she even frets about the difficulty of getting big advertisers to support the magazine. The big advertisers who *do* support her in the August issue of the magazine include Ford, Chevy, Kellogg, Clorox, Johnson-Johnson, Doubleday Book Club, and Target. I'll boycott them all, and write their main offices and tell them why.

This isn't about Rosie, it's about freedom and rights. There are 80 million of us she wants to imprison. If we don't act now, while we still have the chance, she may someday get her wish. — **Dave Duffy**

# water: a safe supply when you're off the grid

By Jeffrey R. Yago, P.E., CEM

**T**hat remote mountain property seemed like a steal until you found out you could not drill a well. Four years ago we were approached by a professional couple from a major city, who had just purchased property in the very remote mountains of Idaho. After selecting the perfect site to build their dream retirement home, their well driller came up dry after drilling multiple wells over 500 feet deep.

Although their site included a spectacular view of a fast moving Idaho stream, this water passes through a wilderness area which is home to bear, elk, and fish all sharing this same water supply. Since there is a potential for water contamination from both animal wastes and decaying material, and hauling drinking water miles from the nearest town did not seem practical, an alternative water system was needed.

At one time or another, almost all of us have quenched our thirst directly from a stream in the woods, but an occasional drink does not offer the same health risk as permanently supplying all residential drinking, washing, and food preparation water needs from an untreated water source.

Although a large segment of the world's population still uses untreated surface water for their daily needs, water related illnesses are increasing dramatically as population density and waste levels rise.

Recent media stories of widespread illnesses caused from eating unwashed fruits and vegetables are now commonplace, and soap alone is not effective if the rinse water is untreated.

Just when the lack of an adequate water supply for this home was developing into a major problem, we were com-

pleting the design of the solar energy system to power this off-grid dome home. When it became apparent the water issue could jeopardize the entire project, we began contacting manufacturers of water treatment equipment for a solution.

Although there are many commercial water purification systems on the market, most are either too large or require more electricity to power than most off-grid solar electric systems can provide. After further analysis, we designed the simplified site built system shown in the accompanying piping diagram.

Initially, a local backhoe operator dug out an area along the creek bank and buried four 3-foot diameter concrete culverts stacked on top of each other. Being in creek gravel, this infiltration well quickly filled with water from the creek and provided an unlimited supply of untreated water for pumping up to the home site. Unfortunately, a major rain upstream caused a significant storm surge



*Off-grid dome home using creek water*



*500-gallon water storage tank*



*Sand filter and tank pre-filter*

which totally carried away everything but the end of the wiring that had been connected to the two now missing (and expensive) submersible pumps.

We wanted to avoid using a skimmer type inlet due to the constant need to remove debris and high risk of damage from this fast moving stream. Therefore, a shallow drilled well, approximately 30 feet deep, was located higher up the creek bank. This shallow depth well in loose rock near the creek also quickly filled with surface water, but was no longer in danger of storm damage. Now with a good source of untreated water established, it was time to design a low energy water purification system.

### **Pumping system design**

Pumping water requires lots of energy and AC pumps would require operating a generator all day due to the very limited capacity of the planned solar photovoltaic system.

Therefore, a two-stage low pressure/high pressure pumping design was developed with two pumps installed in the shallow well. Near the bottom, a slow flow 24-volt DC Solar Jack pump was installed which supplies a slow but constant water flow throughout the day from the shallow well up to the higher elevation home site. A 120-volt AC pump was installed higher in the well, having a

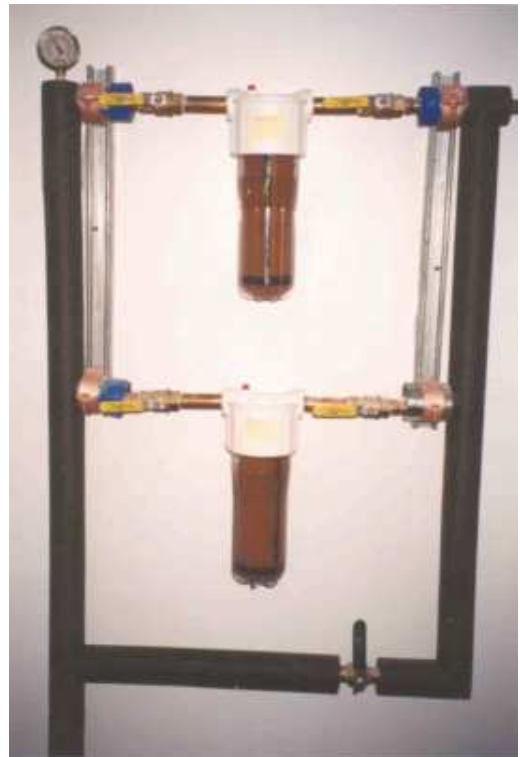
high flow rate and powered directly from the generator. Due to the danger of forest fires and occasional garden watering needs, it was decided this two pump design provided both energy efficient low flow and emergency high flow requirements.

Since it takes most of the lift capacity of the slow flow DC pump to raise the water from the well up to the ground floor elevation of the new house, this low pressure flow could not be connected directly into the home's plumbing system which requires short periods of high pressure flows throughout the day. A 500-gallon 3 foot-high by 5 foot-diameter 5/16-inch wall plastic storage tank filled directly from the low flow well pump was installed in the ground floor utility room.

A pre-filter was installed in the piping from the well to the storage tank after finding that the creek water was usually cloudy and would deposit sediment in the tank which required monthly clean out.

A ball float switch is used to activate the DC well pump when the water level in the tank is low, and turn off when full. We soon determined the 500 gallons of water storage did not cycle the tank satisfactorily with a low pump flow, so the water level was lowered to approximately 300 gallons which provided much better tank cycling. The 300 gallons of stored water seems to easily meet an average home's water requirements for several days. This slow pump and storage tank design combination would also help solve capacity problems with sites having slow recovery deep drilled wells, by using a second pump and a tank as a buffer.

The generator-powered AC pump is not used to refill the storage tank,



*Dual carbon filters*



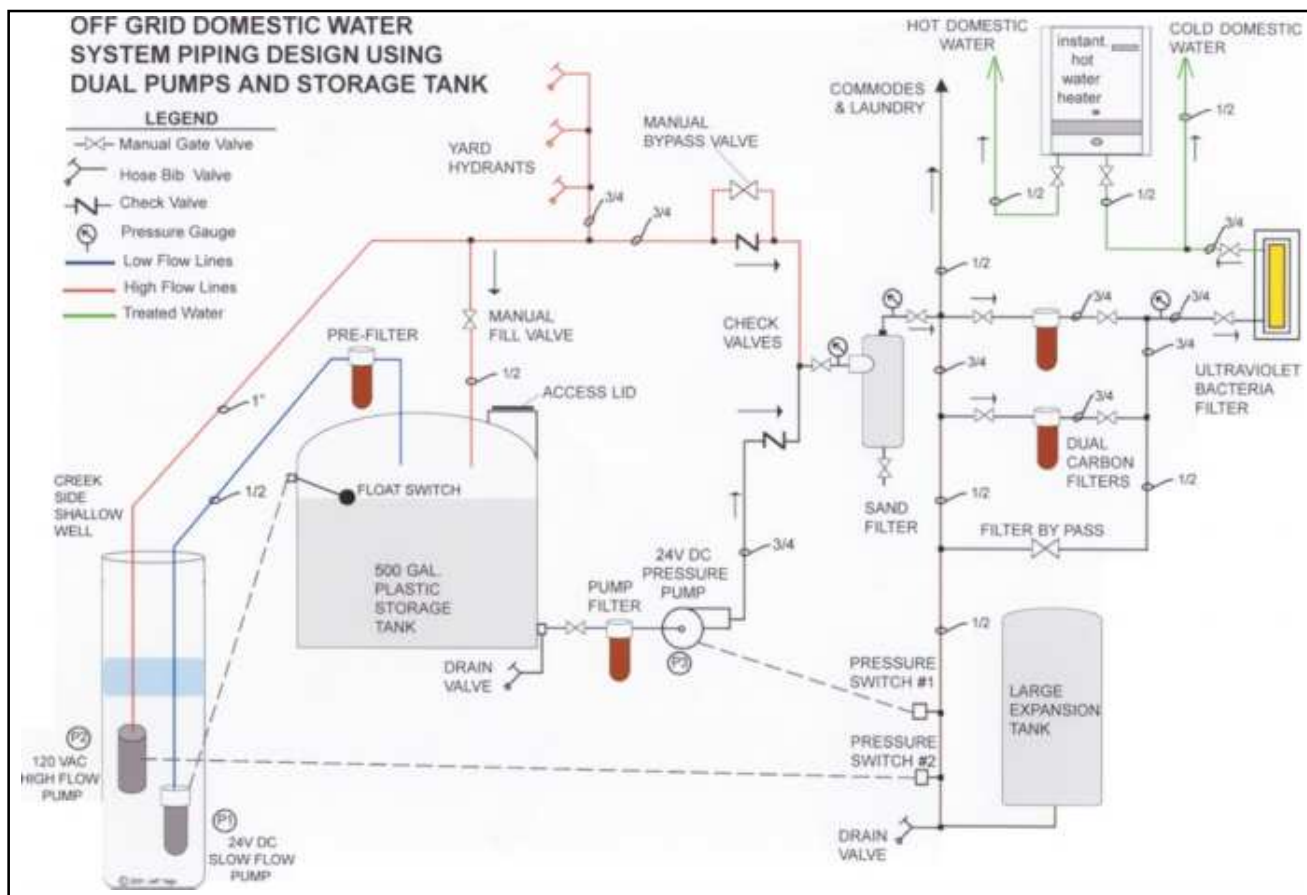
24-volt DC to 120-volt inverter and solar battery charger

although a hand operated bypass valve allows backup filling if the slow

pump fails. A Dankoff high-pressure pump powered by a high efficiency

24-volt DC motor was connected to a bottom fitting on the storage tank. This pump is extremely energy efficient and has a very low power drain on the solar charged batteries, but its close mechanical tolerance requires a particle filter between the tank and the pump inlet to remove pump damaging sand or grit. This DC pump supplies the home's conventional plumbing system from the storage tank once the water has passed through the site built filtering system.

All pumps require a very high initial inrush of electricity to start pumping from a no flow state. By using a very large expansion tank, all pumps will run longer after startup, but will also stay off longer before system pressure drops. This significantly reduces short cycling of the pumps, which reduces both pump wear and electrical system demand.





## Low energy water filter

After the stored water has left the tank and passed through a sand filter to remove all solids and particles, this water passes through dual carbon cartridge filters. Only one carbon filter is in use at a time, and the flow can be quickly valved over to the second carbon filter allowing filter replacement as needed.

The carbon filters remove all taste related problems associated with many well water systems, and also reduce minerals that can cause scale buildup on plumbing fixtures. Replacement cartridges are also available to remove lead if needed. At this point the water is as mechanically clean as possible, but microscopic bacteria can easily pass through even multiple stages of mechanical filters. The final stage of water purification is an ultraviolet water purifier.

This unit includes a 254-nanometer wave length ultraviolet light at the correct intensity to kill all bacteria, mold spores, protozoa, viruses, and pathogenic microorganisms typically found in untreated surface water. This innovative device consists of a stainless steel cylinder having a water inlet and outlet at each end. Down the center is a high pressure quartz glass tube containing an ultraviolet fluorescent tube lamp. Due to the narrow water chamber formed between the outer glass wall and the inner steel cylinder, all of the water passes closely around and along this ultraviolet lamp before exiting. Keeping water flow under 7 g.p.m. allows more than enough exposure time to kill all micro-organisms. Comodes, yard hydrants, and laundry equipment not requiring this level of water quality can be connected to the pressurized system at a point ahead of this filter.

It should be noted that testing of ultraviolet light filters has shown some bacteria can "swim" short distances past the light after flow has stopped and the light turned off.



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*Flow switch and ultraviolet water purifier*

Some models now include a quick action automatic valve to address this issue.

Note the flow switch located to the left of the ultraviolet water filter shown in the photo which was designed to turn off this unit as soon as water flow was stopped to reduce

energy use. Although we were careful to use a very high quality and sensitive flow switch, we still had concern that the water system could be contaminated if this light ever failed to turn on quickly. After determining that the solar charged battery system had the capacity to operate the low wattage lamp continuously, the homeowner now unplugs this unit only during winter system shut down and system draining.

The pumping diagram shows how both well pumps supply the filtering system through individual check valves. This was necessary to insure garden watering would not quickly back drain the storage tank. Garden watering should only take place when the generator is operating to power the AC pump directly. The manual bypass valve shown piped around the check valve in the AC pump line allows the pressure switch controlling the AC pump to "see" the yard faucet pressure drop. Without this manual bypass, this pressure switch would shutoff the AC pump once the home's domestic water system was at full pressure, even if all yard faucets were wide open.

tank at first appears to be complex, this system offers solutions to many off-grid domestic water problems including:

- Maximizes performance of very slow recovery wells.
- Allows utilizing surface, pond, and creek water sources where safer deep wells are not practical.
- Provides substantial reductions in pumping electrical energy over a typical AC submersible well pump system.
- Low energy pumps can be powered directly from a solar charged battery without using an inverter.
- The optional AC pump powered directly from a generator allows occasional garden watering and emergency high water flows from yard faucets without overloading the solar energy system.

Since water quality is becoming a hot button issue for this country, a

### List of material sources:

Off-grid solar electric systems	Dunimis Technology Inc. 804-784-0063 www.dunimis.com
High Quality high pressure DC powered pumps	Dankoff Solar Products 505-820-6611 www.danksolar.com
Solar Jack Submersible DC powered well pumps	Kyocera Solar Inc. 800-544-6466 www.kyocerasolar.com
Series 8101-GUS 7 gpm Ultraviolet Water Filter	Ultra Dynamics 201-489-0044 www.capitalcontrols.com
525 gallon high density polyethylene tank	Poly Processing Company 318-343-7565 www.polyprocessing.com
Teel expansion tank and sand filters	Grainger Supply 1-800-323-0620 www.grainger.com

### Hot water

To complete this low energy domestic water system design, an instantaneous AquaStar tankless propane hot water heater supplies more than enough hot water without electricity. An internal mechanical gas valve opens as soon as water flow is detected, which quickly heats the water flowing through a stainless steel water coil surrounding the gas burner.

### Conclusions

Although using two or more pumps and a large un-pressurized holding



*Tankless instantaneous hot water heater*



low energy solution is needed for off-grid homes. The system described in this article should provide very good health protection when using surface water. However, each water source is different and should be tested prior to final filter equipment selection. The storage tank also offers an ideal point to add Clorox or iodine treatment on a regular schedule for those really difficult water quality issues.

[Jeff Yago, author of the book, *Achieving Energy Independence—One Step At A Time* (see review on page 77), designs and installs turnkey independent energy systems. The book is available from *BHM* (see page 91). Contact Jeff Yago at 804-784-0063.] Δ

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# Living the outlaw life:

## Beware the Great Guru of Freedom *by Claire Wolfe*

**T**he Great Guru of Freedom sits on a mountaintop. Serene and wise, he lives elevated beyond the march of jackboots or the click of bureaucratic computer keys. While millions struggle under crushing taxes, omnipresent surveillance, impossible regulations, and the gradual, groaning loss of liberty, the Great Guru has freed himself—and knows how to free you—from all that. Not through painstaking labor, but simply by knowing *The Secret*, the key whose mere possession will liberate you from tyranny.

The freedom seeker struggles up the mountainside, traversing crevasses, tearing his hands and knees on brambles, braving the piercing, thin air. Weary and sweating, he finally reaches the Great Guru's feet. There, he falls in exhaustion, crying, "Oh Master, teach me the secret to becoming free!"

The Great Guru raises his clear, all-knowing eyes. He opens his lips and speaks ...

"Cut!"

While the director restages this scene, let's look at the script. Actually, there are two scripts for this scene: what a Great Guru ought to say and what all the worldly Great Guru wannabes do say.

Any Great Guru worth his bowl of rice ought to say, loudly and unequivocally, "Don't listen to people like me! Ever!" Because although there are genuine "secrets" to freeing yourself, there is no one secret, no all-knowing guru, no key, no magic bullet that will make the quest for freedom effortless.

What the wannabe gurus (usually found in seminar rooms, Web pages, and ads in political magazines, rather than on mountaintops) actually say is:

"For just \$3,500 I can help you stop paying income tax forever!"

"My video course will reveal how you can eliminate Social Security numbers, drivers licenses, and disappear from every government database! Only \$499."

"Limited opportunity ... Enroll your friends ..."

They promise easy answers—and make easy money selling answers. Never mind that some of their answers could land you in jail. Never mind that none will make you one whit more free (and will usually result in "negative prosperity" even before the IRS turns its Sauron eye in your direction).

Freedom lovers, like the rest of overburdened humanity, are often looking for simple solutions to complex problems. Especially answers to the two big dilemmas:

- How has the country gotten so screwed up?
- and,
- How can I free myself from the mess?

Good questions. But the search for instant, sometimes almost magical, answers makes a lot of freedom seekers ripe for plucking by offshore investment gurus, tax-scam peddlers, and bogus legal authorities as confused spiritual seekers are for plucking by characters who tell them that Heaven can be attained by handing over all their worldly goods (to guess who) or slurping a fatal cup of pudding.

Of course, freedom lovers are hardly the only victims of scammers. (At [www.crimes-of-persuasion.com](http://www.crimes-of-persuasion.com) you can count the ways the scammers prey.) With the population increase since P.T. Barnum's day, there's probably a sucker born about every six-and-a-half seconds. But people who are grasping to comprehend the incomprehensible (like why freedom is yielding so inexorably to tyranny) or to solve the seemingly unsolvable (like watching 40 percent of their family's resources being sucked away to finance big government) are especially vulnerable.

So there is one uglacious hellovalot of this sort of hopeful, pat-answer nonsense in the freedom movement.

"Somebody!" we cry, "*please* give us a way out!" (And while you're at it, make it simple. And oh yeah, risk free.)

Into our lives step persuasive charlatans.

Even gurus who aren't trying to earn a buck off their ideas divert a lot of seekers from a realistic course toward freedom (political or personal) by "selling" us on magical claims.

Go on the Internet or attend any patriot political gathering and you may learn that you can prevent yourself from being enslaved simply by forbidding any government official from writing your name in all capital letters. You may be told that if you visibly carry a small American flag into a courtroom (to counteract the gold-fringed "Admiralty flag" often found in such places) the judge will know you've uncovered the evil secret of the U.S. court system and will be forced to give you real justice. You may be told that getting a birth certificate makes a child the property of the government—rescind your birth certificate and you're free; keep your child from ever getting one, and she's free.



The particular claims vary from year to year and guru to guru, but the common thread is the same: One little legal trick by government is the key to all tyranny, and one little trick is what you need to fight back.

People latch onto these claims. So *that's* how the government is getting away with it! So *that's* how I can restore my freedom! If I just do *that* they'll never be able to touch me, my family, or my money. And if they try, I'll beat 'em in court.

It's like warding off a vampire by holding up a cross. There's just one problem, as all the modern vampire-story writers are fond of pointing out: It only works if your vampire is a Christian. That is, if he respects the power of your symbol. Holding a flag up or refusing to recognize your name when it's written in upper case is going to work only with people who share your concepts—which just about nobody in bureaucracy or the justice system does.

What's even more crazy-making is that while some absurd-sounding claims like these are false, some are actually true but won't get you anywhere in court or in a conflict with the system.

Alabama attorney Larry Becraft, one of the true heroes of the freedom movement, has a whole Web page of futile freedom-movement arguments, both the money-making scams and the innocent failures (<http://fly.hiwaay.net/~becraft/deadissues.htm>). His extended essay includes lists of the many state and federal court cases in which discredited patriot arguments have been shot down.

You don't have to go far before this sort of thing starts making you completely nuts. What's true? What isn't? And what does it all mean—to freedom and to me? Back to the endless seeking again. Sigh of sighs. The weary traveler labors on up the mountainside, seeking freedom along a path that feels increasingly steep and rocky and promises no all-wise guru at its end.

## The Gurules Guru

*Backwoods Home* people have an advantage over more domesticated sorts: We tend to accept effort and risk. It takes more effort to can peaches than to buy them at the store, but you do it for the satisfaction, the quality control, the money-savings, or a dozen other reasons. Building your own home from the foundation up may take years of labor, but if it gets you what you want while keeping you out of the hands of the mortgage bankers, it's worth every gallon of sweat and every aggravating "learning experience."

There is also among *BHMers* a fundamental independence of attitude that's even more important. We may give in to bureaucratic demands because we see no alternative. But we don't give in automatically—as most people do, these days (conditioned by 12 years of government school-

ing, thousands of hours of passive TV-sucking, and the idea that a McDonalds on every street corner somehow means everything is right with the world).

Still, lack of ready solutions often causes even the strongest and most independent of us to bow to tyrannical encroachments we ought to resist.

So even hard workers look for easy answers. Some people demand easy answers when clearly there are none.

A couple of years ago, I wrote a pair of columns for *WorldNetDaily* about why it's a bad idea to allow your child to be tagged with a Social Security number at birth. (Because although this may not make your child literally the property of the government, it certainly labels your child as a resource subject to lifelong management and tracking by bureaucrats.) This is too big a decision to lay upon an unknowing baby, I said. The decision to accept or reject a citizen-tracking number should be made only by a fully informed adult.

Readers responded with objections like these: "But if I don't give her a number, she won't be able to drive when she's 16!"

"But without a number, he may not be allowed into college!" (I won't even address those who complained that they couldn't barter an un-numbered baby for a tax deduction.)

Shutting people off from normal life simply because they lack a government tracking number is—my god, how could anybody not see it?—an act of tyranny. It's exactly what we must resist. And resist. And resist. If you refuse to smack a number on your two-day old now, you'll have 16 or 18 years to work on changing the situation so that she will be driving at 16 or attending college at 18.

Yes, it's a good idea to know the potential risks when you take any action. But these readers weren't anticipating consequences or considering strategies. They wanted tyranny to halt first, in one swell foop. To be halted, that is, through somebody else's efforts. Then, and only then, would they take the smallest step to resist tyranny. After it was gone.

They wanted someone else to solve—in advance, in detail, and in one tidy, well-wrapped package—every SSN-related problem they or their child might ever encounter, which of course nobody can do. All I could do is say, "Here's a step. Here's how to do it. Small, adamant, repeated acts of resistance now are the only hope for saving us from far worse problems later." Not good enough.

These readers wanted either a Great Guru of Freedom—or an excuse not to act.

I probably could have made a mint if I'd sold myself as having the *COMPLETE! FOOLPROOF! SECRET of living without a national ID number! ONLY \$1,999.99!* But I wouldn't have solved anybody's problems.

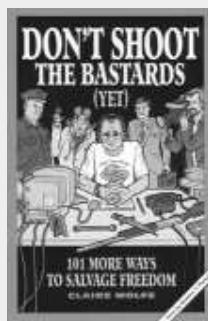
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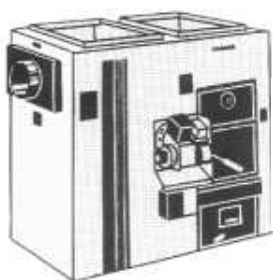
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Except my own, of course. I'd be living in the Bahamas by now.

Beware, beware, beware of:

- Anyone who claims to have *the* answer to anything
- Anyone who wants money up front without first giving you information solid enough for you to investigate independently
- Anyone who claims to guarantee you'll never be hassled by the IRS or other government agency if you follow his methods (There are gurus out there making that claim while their clients face indictment.)
- Anyone selling seminars, unusually high-priced books or videos, or multi-level-marketing "freedom" schemes

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(They're not all crooked, but self-preservation dictates skepticism.)

• Anyone whose solution to a fundamental problem of freedom vs. tyranny sounds just too good, too easy, too risk-free to be true (As with nearly everything else, if it does, it is.)

Of course there are genuine experts in the world. If you need brain surgery, you probably don't want your local jack-of-all-trades to perform it. You might not want to drive a semi truck across a bridge designed by someone who thinks engineering is a frivolous luxury. But sad as it is (and it bugs me, too) there are no experts on freedom.

I would dearly love to be one. Or better yet, to find one, since that would mean somebody else would have to do all the work and risk-taking and I could just tag happily along.

But it's not going to happen.

That's not to say that we're without hope. Instead of gurus, we have two things: attitude and each other.

There may only be a few thousand of us who really want to live freedom, rather than passively complain about its loss. But we are good, strong, intelligent people who (because to submit and obey is to suffer soul-death) have become, in the words of the old Jefferson Airplane song "outlaws in the eyes of America." Friends and strangers to each other, we refuse to be numbered, registered, boxed-in, homogenized, ruled, regulated, deprived of our property, allocated, analyzed, disarmed, or obedient. If this means breaking laws, we do—even though we are most reluctant law-breakers, born good citizens.

We are all struggling, together and alone, to find methods that work, that make us less visible to the databases, less subject to propaganda, less regulated, less oppressively governed, less of a well-managed herd. Some of us are focused on freeing our country. Some of us are focused on freeing ourselves. The best of us are trying to do both.

Some of us have answers that work for some people in some cases. Some have answers that, if we heed them and think seriously about them, might offer hope for the whole country. We may even learn some things from those gurus, experts, book-writers, seminar-leaders, and offbeat legal researchers—as long as we approach their ideas with caution. In this series of articles, I hope readers learn something from me. And I hope, along the way, that I learn new freedom techniques as well. Heaven knows we need 'em.

But nobody—nobody—is ever going to have *the* answer that will free us all, or any one of us, let alone free us with minimal effort and no risk. Δ

Read Claire Wolfe every month at the  
*Backwoods Home Magazine* website:  
**[www.backwoodshome.com](http://www.backwoodshome.com)**



# Ayoob on Firearms:

## Sight and sound enhancement

By Massad Ayoob

**E**nhancing vision and hearing can make you a safer, more effective shooter, and sometimes can save human lives.

Scotopic vision—the way we see in the dark—is a scary thing. The eye doctors say that on a cloudy night, a person with 20/20 vision can distinguish so little that he's the equivalent of legally blind. If you've had to deploy your firearm in the dark, you've become the law school exemplar of recklessness, “a blind man with a gun.”

If you live in a backwoods home, you are surrounded by nocturnal creatures. You are not one of them, at least not by nature. If you anticipate ever deploying a firearm in poor lighting conditions, you want to make sure that you've provided for an artificial light source. This normally takes the form of some sort of flashlight.

New York City cops were the first to pick up on the fact that even in broad daylight, you can suddenly find yourself in a pitch-dark windowless basement. For generations, NYPD has required that even day-shift uni-

formed officers must carry a flashlight at all times. It's a sound policy, one I follow myself when working for the police department. Any hunter, angler, or hiker who has ever been lost in the woods overnight has learned the wisdom of including a flashlight in their “survival kit.”

I've seen cases where a person was shot by mistake by an officer or armed citizen because the individual mimicked a dangerous movement

with an object in their hand that the shooter assumed to be a weapon. The object would turn out to be a wallet, keys, a spoon in one case, and a CD in another. With a powerful flashlight, the shooter would have quite possibly been able to identify the object in question before firing the tragic bullets.

I know one officer who, entering a darkened apartment where foul play was feared, saw a figure rise from behind a sofa in the shadows, holding a revolver. He fired, killing a four-year-old boy who was holding a toy gun. Though he had a flashlight, he had just returned from a training session where he was told not to use it in a danger situation for fear of giving his position away. He is convinced that if he had employed the flashlight, he would have seen what he was dealing with and not fired the fatal shot.

Learn how to employ a light with a firearm. A good universal technique with a handgun was developed by the late Mike Harries. The weapon is held one-handed. The support hand holds the flashlight with the lamp protruding from the bottom of the fist, and the backs of the hands are pressed together. This aligns the flashlight beam with the gun barrel. The thumb works a butt-mounted flashlight button, while the middle finger does that operation if the button is on the barrel of the flashlight. Be sure to practice it safely. Dry-fire before you try it with live ammo. It is critical that the flashlight hand come under the gun butt. The slide of the pistol can lacerate the hand and cause a gun jam if the hand has come over the gun-hand wrist instead of beneath it.

A number of companies make flashlight attachments that mount directly to the gun. Heckler and Koch has a good one for their excellent USP pistol series. Wilson Technologies, Insights Technologies,



*Captain Ayoob prepares to trigger his MP5 with SureFire light unit built into fore-end. Finger pressure on switch activates light. Note also that he's wearing Wolf Ears active hearing protectors, a critical tool for searching or hunting.*

and SureFire all make good units. I personally use the latter.

These make particular sense with a rifle or shotgun, since long guns are particularly difficult to coordinate with separate flashlights. If nocturnal predators are ravaging your vegetable garden or stalking your chicken coop, this may be the best system. It's not unethical, like jacklighting deer, so long as you've checked the fish and game laws and confirmed that you're allowed to shoot pest animals on your own property, and at night. These attachments are made for a wide array of guns. I have one on my department-issue HK MP5 submachinegun, and believe me, the SureFire unit makes a world of difference in a hinky situation in the dark. I was on one drug raid where a suspect appeared in the window of the target house as we approached. An officer brought up his Benelli autoloading shotgun with SureFire light attached, and beamed the man in the eyes. He spun away from the bright beam. A potentially lethal situation had been resolved without bloodshed.

Beware of doing a building search with the light mounted on the gun. It



*Ayoob shoots a qualification course with Wolf Ears. Though barely visible, even in daytime, the SureFire light clipped to front of his belt in a carrier he designed.*

requires great coolness and discipline. When you see something that surprises you, the startle response can cause your finger to convulse on the trigger; the gun is pointed along with the flashlight at whatever it was you saw; and whatever is in the beam of the light dies. Make sure the finger is out of the trigger guard and the gun is "on safe" or un-cocked.

## Active hearing protection

Active hearing protectors are a Godsend for building searches, waiting for the fox to come to the henhouse, etc. The best I've found is the Gentex 1030A, aka "Wolf Ears." They let you determine the direction a sound came from, and have magnificent low-end amplification, yet they reduce loud sounds like gunfire. In Africa, I was able to hear where the animals were and point in their direction before my trackers and guides, including the fabulous bushmen of Namibia, were able to hear them. That's because I was wearing Wolf Ears. Yet the brutal roar of my .375 Magnum and .458 Magnum rifles never bothered me. Best of all worlds.

Sight and sound are our two most critical sensory inputs when things get serious enough that we need to have a gun in hand. This is why I almost always wear a flashlight, even on my own time. It's why I have a SureFire attached to the Beretta 9mm I keep near my bedside, and on that MP5. This is also why I have a pair of Wolf Ears by the bed and in the patrol car.



*Beretta Ayoob keeps by his bed at night has SureFire light attached. It can be activated by pressure switch on grip or manual switch on unit. Pistol has also been modified with Jarvis extended and MagnaPorted barrel, Trijicon night sights, and pre-ban 20 round magazine.*



*In addition to building searches and hunting, Wolf Ears are great for coaching new shooters. They were worn by Samantha Kemp, left, and Courtney Kemp (still wearing hers) during this pistol shooting session. Center hits show they listened to the advice they heard through the electronics.*

(If you can't find these products locally, we carry SureFire flashlights and carriers, SureFire light systems that attach to firearms (usually replacing the fore-end on the long guns), and Wolf Ears at my wife's business, Armor of New Hampshire, PO Box 122, Concord, NH 03302, tel (800) 624-9049, [www.ayooob.com](http://www.ayooob.com).) Δ

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# THE COMING AMERICAN DICTATORSHIP

## PART VI

### How judges and prosecutors have undermined the right of the American people to nullify laws

By John Silveira

(This is the sixth installment of a multi-part series on the erosion of our constitutional government. The first five parts are available on CD-ROM. See page 3 or 95.)

It was mid-afternoon and, with Mac awake again, Dave suggested we take a ride. So he, Mac, and I left the office and went to get a late lunch at a little fish and chips restaurant down the coast in the town of Brookings. Dave was killing two birds with one stone with this trip because he also had to pick up some computer supplies.

Dave, of course, is Dave Duffy, the publisher of this magazine, and Mac is O.E. MacDougal, our poker-playing friend from southern California. We'd spent most of the morning talking about what Mac calls "the Coming American Dictatorship." Apparently, what concerns him is not so much some Hitler or Stalin-like figure suddenly leaping out of the woodwork and assuming power; it's the continuing erosion of our rights, as government at all levels grows and becomes more intrusive in our lives. He's especially concerned about the loss of rights which has accompanied the explosive growth of government in this country since 1933.

As we reached Dave's car, Mac indicated I should get in the passenger's seat in front while he climbed in back. I did.

After we were all belted in Dave asked, "Mac, what do you think is the most important thing people should do to protect their rights?"

"Get out the vote and throw the bums who are in there out of office," I said.

"That would help," Mac said. "If the American people had all along made it clear to our elected officials, at the polling booth, that we wouldn't tolerate infringements of our freedoms, we wouldn't have the endless succession of laws that make one exception to our rights after another.

"And we wouldn't have these new rights invented by Congress, the White House, and various bureaucrats that create privileges for one segment of society but mandate that other segment of society *must* provide those privileges, whether those privileged parts of society are corporations or people on welfare.

"We'd also have control over those bureaucracies that have been spawned and which seem to rule us now. In fact, the bureaucracies would be vastly smaller and there'd be fewer of them, and most of the people who currently have government jobs or jobs in private industry that support government bureaucracies would have to go out and get productive jobs, and that would benefit us all."

#### Jury trials

"I get the impression," Dave said, "that you feel there's something other than the voting that would change things."

"There is at least one."

"And that is...?" Dave asked.

"If Americans would pay more attention to what goes on in courtrooms, and particularly pay attention to the way government, at all levels, stacks juries and has made them pawns of the government. If we would stop that, it would put us in a



John Silveira

position to get control over abusive government."

"How would we make that happen? How would we get Americans more aware of what's going on in courtrooms?" Dave asked.

"Two things would have to happen. First, we'd have to insist that jurors be made aware of their real power in the courtroom. Second, we'd have to insist on more jury trials."

"More jury trials?" Dave asked.

"Yes, we should demand that anytime a citizen is in a position to lose his personal property, his freedom, or his life, that he or she should be able to demand and receive a trial before a *random* jury of his peers."

"This is something we've talked about before," Dave said.

"Yes, it is," Mac said.

"Could we talk about it, again?" I asked. "Especially what you just said—'a *random* jury of our peers.'"

"Sure. But first we've got to understand the two issues here. The **first** concerns what citizens should know when they sit on a jury. The **second** is that there are more and more 'crimes' of which you can be accused, for

which you may fined, have your property seized, be imprisoned, or even executed—but for which you will not receive a jury trial.

“We should insist that if the government wants to try you, it should do so before a jury of citizens who are the final arbiters of whether or not you have really committed a crime.”

“What’s wrong with trials before a judge?” I asked.

“Nothing—if that’s what *you* want when you’re the defendant. But unless you request a trial before a judge, you should be able to exercise the option of being tried before your fellow citizens.”

“Why are jury trials so important?” I asked.

“The laws are there to control how we act in certain circumstances. We’re supposed to obey them. So we, the citizens, should insist that the laws make sense and that they’re applied fairly. And when we sit on juries, we should not only hear the government’s case against one of *us*, but ensure the laws are just.

“This isn’t something I just thought up,” he added. “The demand for jury trials, where the juries are made up of a group of the defendant’s peers—and in this country, that would be our fellow citizens—goes all the way back to the *Magna Carta*, because even then jury trials were meant to stop government abuse.”

“But you say we don’t always get jury trials,” Dave said. “When aren’t jury trials used?”

“It isn’t just a question of when they aren’t used, it’s a question of when they aren’t even *allowed*. Among the cases in which they aren’t allowed are IRS cases, family law cases, and in many federal courts.”

“But tax law is very difficult to understand,” I said, taking the side of the government in this case. “Juries may not be able to understand the complexities and ramifications of such cases.”

“Think about what that means. You’re saying that tax law is too difficult for the average juror to understand after several days of testimony in a court case—after it’s been explained to him by experts. Yet, the average Joe on the street still has to abide by those laws. How can laws that can deprive us of our property and our freedom be fair if jurors can’t even understand them when they’re explained in a courtroom? Those are some of the kinds of laws that fully informed juries, that is, juries who know their rights, would refuse to convict under.

**“Jury nullification is when a jury acquits a person of a crime, even though it’s clear he committed the crime, because the jurors feel there are extenuating circumstances, or because they feel the law is unjust, or because the sentence will be too harsh, or because they feel the law is applied unfairly.”**

“What I would like to see done is to let jurors hear those cases and any other cases where the government has brought suit against a citizen. And if the laws are too confusing, the jury can be the first to tell the government, ‘Screw you.’ The result would be that in a short time politicians and bureaucrats would know what laws the American people will and won’t tolerate.”

“So you’re saying that if we insisted that more trials be presented before juries we’d have better laws,” Dave said.

“Yes. If the American people really want fair and sensible laws, they’re going to have to see how they’re applied, firsthand. I say let juries made up of the citizenry—made up of average citizens—hear *all* the cases.

“But coupled with that, of course, the jurors must be informed of their right to jury nullification. Then I can

guarantee you that the only laws that will be left will be sensible laws.”

“This sounds like it’s too simple of a solution,” Dave said. “Yet, on the surface it seems that this is one thing that could stop runaway government.”

“Sure, but government at all levels has succeeded in denying juries their powers, and often succeeded just denying us jury trials. They have managed to get the governed—that’s us, the average citizens—out of the loop. But what makes it worse is that we, the average citizens, don’t care that we’ve been taken out of the loop. We don’t care what laws are being passed and how bad laws, laws that infringe upon our rights, are applied—against us.”

“But we can change bad laws at the ballot box,” I said. “We can elect different people to get rid of bad laws and pass better laws.”

“We can, but that takes years. First you’ve got to elect a majority who agree on making a fair law, then you have to overcome the resistance to changes because of so-called special interests who want the law in place, and then you’ve got to hope that the changes are sensible.

“Keep in mind that when you expect people to vote to change bad laws you’re assuming that the voters are seeing the bad laws in action. But the fact is only a small percentage of the citizenry actually see the laws applied. And those who do are often limited to the defendant and 12 jurors. You can’t expect major changes in the law when you depend on the entire of the electorate to see each and every law.

“The other problem is what happens to the accused while we’re waiting years, even decades, for the electorate to change the state legislatures or the Congress so that the laws are changed?”

“In the early part of the 20th century, when Prohibition was part of the law of the land, the attempts to repeal

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it were taking years. Meanwhile, peoples' lives were being ruined.

"However, juries began showing their unwillingness to convict people in courtrooms under those laws and prosecutors became increasingly reluctant to prosecute these cases.

"Jury by jury, the American people were sending a message to the government that they wouldn't tolerate laws *that were bad*."

"Well, I know I'd hate to have my life ruined by bad laws and have to sit in some stinking cell waiting for some guy watching reruns of *My Favorite Martian* to get off his duff and vote for something sensible," Dave said.

I slumped back in my seat trying to think of how to respond to this.

"The voting booth is fine," Mac said. "But what we actually need is democracy in *both* the ballot box *and* the jury box."

"What if you had to choose only one?" Dave asked, and I got the feeling he was asking it to be funny.

We passed Cape Sebastian, the highest point on the Oregon coast, and started down the hill.

Mac said, "If I had to pick just one, I'd rather have democracy in the jury box than at the ballot box."

"Really?" Dave asked. "Why?"

"At the ballot box millions of people go to vote who don't know what the

issues are. That's part of the reason why we have so many bad laws. However, in the jury box, it doesn't matter what you've been doing up until the moment you sit there. You can't help but hear what the issues really are. At least the ones that relate to the case at hand. I think people leave the jury box better informed than when they got there. I think they make better decisions in the jury box than they do in the ballot box.

"On the other hand, at the ballot box people are stupid when they show up and stupid when they leave."

He paused. "But, in reality, we can't have one without the other. Unfortunately, whereas as voters we often understand the power of the ballot, when we're jurors we usually don't know that while we are sitting in the jury box we are the most powerful force in the courtroom. We are more powerful than the judge or any

of the attorneys there. We are trying not only the defendant, but we also have an opportunity to try the law."

"And when a jury finds *against the law*, that's jury nullification," Dave said.

"That's right," Mac responded.

"Jury nullification?" I asked.

"We've talked about it before," Dave said.

I nodded as I began to remember a little about it.

Mac went on, "Jury nullification is when a jury acquits a person of a crime, even though it's clear he committed the crime, because the jurors feel there are extenuating circumstances, or because they feel the law is unjust, or because the sentence will be too harsh, or because they feel the law is applied unfairly."

I looked over the backseat and asked, "But shouldn't we just let the legislators change these things? I don't think it's the jury's place to change the law."

"There are two things wrong with that," he replied. "The first is that the jury isn't changing the law. They're just refusing to apply it in a particular case. However, I think it's clear that if prosecutors can't win cases under a particular law, because one jury after another refuses to apply it, they will stop using that law to prosecute the citizens, and the legislature will get the message. On the other hand, continuing to convict, even when you know the law is wrong, sends the wrong message to both the prosecutors and the legislature. It's saying that we the citizens feel the law is okay.

"The second thing wrong with that scenario—and this is crucial to stopping abuses by the state—is that even if a judge tells me I have to, I'm not going to ruin a fellow citizen's life while the legislature spends years pondering whether to change it or not. Particularly when so many of our laws have been passed, not because they are sensible, but because they



appease one special interest group or another.

"I'm not going to act like a guard at a concentration camp and just 'follow orders,'" he said. "If the law is wrong, it's wrong."

No one said anything for a moment.

"Do you have examples of each of the things you just mentioned?" Dave asked Mac. "You know, nullifying laws because of extenuating circumstances, because laws are unjust, sentences that are too harsh, or a law is unfairly applied?"

"Sure. In the first case, imagine a man is called to his daughter's home because her boyfriend has threatened to come back and kill her. He gets to his daughter's house and she has a gun to protect herself. The boyfriend arrives, still threatening to kill her *and her father*, and he breaks down the door. The woman's father takes the gun and kills the boyfriend. It would appear to be a case of self defense. But it turns out the father is an ex-felon and, by law, is not allowed to handle a gun.

"So, even though he used the gun in self defense, and even though it's clear that he saved his daughter's life, as well as his own, the D.A. has him arrested for violating that gun law.

"In just such a case, which happened some years back in Georgia, the jury was instructed to bring a verdict of 'guilty' if the prosecution proved its case. And there was no question that the prosecution had proved its case. Unaware that they could have refused to bring a guilty verdict because of extenuating circumstances, the jury followed the judge's explicit instructions and rendered the only verdict they thought possible: guilty.

"After the trial, several of the jurors even approached the defendant and told him—some crying—that none of them wanted to bring a guilty verdict, but that they felt 'ordered' to obey the judge.

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"Only later did they find out that they didn't have to. But now the guy is serving time.

"But had just one of those jurors the courage to defy the judge's faulty instructions, or had just one of them known what his or her real rights and duties as a juror were, the man may well have gone free."

"There should have been a mistrial because of faulty instructions to the jury," I said.

"You'd think so. But the Supreme Court has already ruled that a judge's failure to inform the jury of its right to nullification is not grounds for a mistrial. In fact, the Court has ruled that even if the judge denies that the right exists..."

"You mean 'lies to the jury,'" Dave interrupted.

"Yes," Mac said. "Even that is not grounds for a mistrial."

"Why didn't the defendant's lawyer tell the jury about jury nullification?" I asked.

"Because most judges would either find that lawyer in contempt of court, or he'd declare a mistrial and they'd have to start all over again.

"And, if you were wondering, the Supreme Court has also ruled that it's okay for judges to prevent lawyers from explaining nullification to juries."

We crossed over the Pistol River and I thought it was ironic, considering Mac's example, that we were doing so at that time.

"In the second case," Mac continued, "imagine a woman with cancer who is undergoing radiation and chemotherapy and finds the only way

she can make it through the treatment, and the only way she can keep food down, is by smoking marijuana. Imagine also that her doctor is aware of this and has given her his approval."

"As I understand it, the marijuana actually helps during those treatments," Dave said.

"That's the way I understand it, too," Mac said. Then he continued. "Now, say smoking marijuana is illegal where she lives and she's caught and brought to trial, and you're on the jury. The prosecution proves she

was smoking. She, in fact, admits she was smoking. Even her doctor testifies that he knew she was smoking, but he says it was helping her.

"But, we are told by the prosecution that the question of marijuana's medical benefits are of no concern to the jury in the case. And you're on the jury. The judge instructs you to bring a verdict of guilty if the prosecution has proved its case. And it has proved its case. What's your verdict?"

"Well," I said, "now I know I don't have to bring a verdict of guilty, so I wouldn't."

"But in similar trials, a lot of juries do," he said.

"This would then be another case where an informed jury would throw the state's case out," Dave said.

"That's right," Mac replied.

"What's an example of an unjust sentence?" Dave asked.

"Take as an example the 'three strikes' laws. Various states have passed them. When the legislators were campaigning for them, they led the citizens to believe that they were going to be used to put 'career criminals' away forever. But in one of the first cases in California, a man with two felony convictions against him

was being tried under the three strikes law for walking out of a Taco Bell without paying. He was, technically, shoplifting, but the state was making it a felony case and, if convicted, the man was going to spend the rest of his life behind bars. Now, if I knew more of the history of this man perhaps I'd agree he should die behind bars. But barring that, if his 'life of

**The Fully Informed Jury Association (FIJA) proposes a constitutional amendment such as the following:**

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crime' was no more than stealing food when he was hungry, would you be willing to give him life imprisonment over three or four dollars worth of fast food?"

"I guess I wouldn't," I said.

"Then, either you'd hang the jury or convince them that this case was ridiculous and they should acquit the guy and send a message to the prosecutor.

"But in thousands of cases, juries unwillingly send people to jail for absurdly long sentences. In fact, they often do it because they don't even know what the sentence is going to be. It's one more of the things we should insist on when we're asked to pass judgment on our fellow man: what's the penalty if we convict him? In many cases, jurors have said they would never have voted for conviction if they'd known how harsh a penalty was going to be meted out."

"What about unfairly applied laws?" Dave asked.

"Do you remember about 25 years ago, when you were living in Oxnard, California, you were stopped by the police. You were in front of your house, drinking a beer on the sidewalk?"

"Yes."

"What did they tell you?"

"They said I couldn't drink on the street."

"And you asked, 'How come?' and the cop said...?"

"He said it was 'one of those laws we have to keep the Mexicans in line.'"

"As I recall, you were outraged by

that statement. Here's a law that would seem to apply to everyone, but its real use was against Mexicans. Now, would you bring a verdict of guilty against a Mexican if you were on the jury in a case that was

applied only to Mexicans?"

Dave shook his head and said, "No, of course not."

"Well, there you have it. Those were examples of cases where jury nullification would be applied," Mac said.

"And you say jury nullification goes all the way back to the Magna Carta," I said.

"In other cultures, it even predates that. But the whole purpose of ensuring jury trials was to ensure that, if the king—the government—managed to get unjust laws passed, the people still had the power to peacefully nullify them.

## Rights and nullification

"Many of the rights we have today were recognized by the government only because of jury nullification."

"Like what?" Dave asked.

"The source of religious freedom in England, and hence the source of religious freedom in the English colonies, including the American colonies, can be traced back to 1670

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is continued on page 54.

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is continued from page 26.

and the refusal of a London jury to convict William Penn for preaching Quaker beliefs. But the court, outraged by the jury's verdict, imprisoned the jurors for a time and ordered them to change their verdict. But they wouldn't relent. Finally, another English judge ordered the jury's verdict to stand claiming that, unless a jurors' decision was coerced or suborned, a jury's verdict is beyond review. In effect, he was saying, what's the point in having a jury involved in a trial if the state is going to dictate the jury's verdict?

"Twenty-two years later, in Salem, Massachusetts, the witch trials refused to a halt because juries began refusing to return convictions, even though the defendants met all the requirements set out by the colonial government to be deemed guilty of witchcraft. There must have been fifty such acquittals before the colony gave up trying citizens as 'witches.'"

"What right did we get out of that?" I asked.

"Part of the reason the juries stopped returning guilty verdicts in the witch trials was because the defendants were frequently tortured to extract confessions. The juries didn't think confessions extracted under torture were reliable.

"This wasn't lost on the Founding Fathers of this country who, almost 100 years later, included the right against self-incrimination in the *Fifth Amendment*. The way the Founding Fathers said it was, '...nor be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself...'

"The right to a free press was established in the North American colonies by a jury in 1735, before it was guaranteed by the Bill of Rights in 1791."

"What was that case?" Dave asked.

"John Zenger, a printer in New York, was arrested and tried for libel because he published attacks on the colonial governor. The government's

case was based on a law that forbade attacks on the government, even if the allegations were true. Zenger's attorney, a Philadelphia lawyer named Andrew Hamilton, convinced the jury to acquit Zenger even though he was clearly in violation of the law.

"In 1798, during the Administration of John Adams, the *Sedition Act* was passed to ban the publishing of writings against the government or the inciting of opposition to any act of Congress or the president."

"More censorship," Dave said.

"Yes, and when the government brought various publishers to trial, they soon found out it was almost impossible to get convictions, even though it was clear the publishers were in violation of the *Act*."

Dave said, "But the *First Amendment*, guaranteeing freedom of the press, was just..." He thought a second. "...the *Bill of Rights* was enacted in 1791...so it was just seven years old."

"That's right. And, of course, the jurors of that time would have been intimately familiar with their rights as well as their power to nullify bad laws. But if one of today's judges was overseeing one of those cases, he or she would have instructed the jurors to disregard the *First Amendment* and bring a verdict of guilty if the defendants were shown to be in violation of the *Sedition Act*."

"But the *Constitution* is the 'law of the land,'" Dave said. "It says so right in the *Constitution* itself."

"It does," Mac said. "But today's judges have convinced jurors that they are allowed to exclude it from *their* courtrooms."

"When do they ever do that?" I asked.

Mac shrugged. "In almost every courtroom in this country, if you are arrested on a weapons charge, you are not allowed to introduce the *Second Amendment* into your case."

"Even though it's the law of the land," Dave said flatly.

Mac nodded.

"But the *Constitution* is supposed to be the law that binds the government..." Dave said and his voice trailed off.

Mac nodded again.

"So, we're supposed to obey the laws they pass to the letter, but the one set of laws they are *obligated* to adhere to, the set that we're told hundreds of thousands of soldiers have died for..."

"Don't keep going on this," Mac said, "Or you'll get *me* started."

I looked back at Mac. "What other times has jury nullification made a difference?" I interrupted.

"Well, prior to the Civil War, the failure of the *Fugitive Slave Act*, as it was originally passed, came about because juries refused to return convictions."

"What was the *Fugitive Slave Act*?" I asked.

"It was a law, passed by Congress, that ordered the return of runaway slaves who had fled their masters in the South and took refuge in the North. There was an option in the *Act* allowing the slaves to ask for a jury trial. Of course, what happened was that it immediately became almost impossible to get a northern jury to find against the erstwhile slaves and order their return to a life of slavery in the South."

"Why didn't that end slavery?" I asked. "Why'd we wind up with the Civil War, anyway?"

"In part because the War wasn't over slavery, though slavery was a factor. It was actually about secession. But jury nullification in these cases couldn't have ended slavery, anyway, because the federal government's reaction was to circumvent the people and pass a law that ended jury trials in these cases."

"You mean, when the government couldn't get its way in court, it just ended jury trials?" Dave asked.

"That's exactly what it did. That's why the federal government today has so many trials without juries. It realizes that there are a great many



cases, such as tax cases and cases involving bureaucratic decrees, where their cases would be thrown out one after another if juries, made up of private citizens, realized just how ludicrous many laws are.”

“What other things have been changed in this country by jury nullification?” I asked.

“In the 20th century Prohibition ended because juries refused to convict people of the *consensual crime* of drinking booze. The *XXI Amendment*, which repealed Prohibition, was the direct result of those juries.”

“So, it’s fair to say that the government doesn’t like jury nullification,” Dave said. “They probably see it as though it’s a kind of an ‘in your face’ response from the citizens.”

“That’s right. The state never likes it when the governed disagree with its laws. William Penn’s trial wasn’t the only time when jurors were fined, imprisoned, and even tortured for returning verdicts the state didn’t like. There were times, before Penn’s trial, when the jurors and even their families went to prison because the state didn’t like the jury’s decision.”

“What do they do to jurors today when they refuse to convict defendants that the government thinks they should have?” Dave asked.

“In this country? Nothing. *Amendment VII* of the *Constitution* guarantees that jury verdicts which nullify laws cannot be reviewed and the Supreme Court has affirmed this. However, in a recent court case a Colorado woman named Laura Kriho was jailed for not telling the judge she understood jury nullification. She was eventually released, but the message has been sent to other jurors that they had best toe the line or pay for it.

“However, judges usually don’t have to do anything that drastic, because today the government’s strategy is to make sure that jurors who would question the law never get impanelled.”

“What do you mean?” I asked as I turned back to see him again.

“Just what I said. The government now routinely excludes from a jury anyone who would question the law.”

I thought about that for a few seconds.

“Well, it may make sense,” I said. “I’d be afraid that if juries weren’t bound by the judges instructions that we’d have anarchy.”

“For the first 125 years of this country, juries were routinely instructed by trial judges that they could judge the law as well as the defendant. And, as I pointed out, there were many times when defendants were acquitted because the jurors found the laws unfair or unjust—even though the defendants were obviously guilty. But there are no references to anarchy in this country during that time. You don’t know something I’m not aware of, do you?”

I didn’t respond.

## Nullification and the Founding Fathers

“Did the guys who gave us the *Constitution* believe jurors have the right to nullify laws?” Dave asked.

“You can find it in the writings of many of the Founding Fathers.”

“Can you quote a few?” Dave asked.

Mac looked up at the roof of the car for a moment. “Thomas Jefferson, President and author of the



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*Declaration of Independence*, said, ‘I consider trial by jury as the only anchor ever yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution.’

“John Adams, the second President, and also a signer of the *Declaration of Independence*, wrote, ‘It is not only his right, but his duty’—meaning the juror’s right and duty—‘to find the verdict according to his own best understanding, judgement, and conscience, though in direct opposition to the direction of the court.’

“Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, wrote, ‘Jurors should acquit, even against the judge’s instruction...if exercising their judgement with discretion and honesty they have a clear conviction that the charge of the court is wrong.’”

“But none of these guys were judges,” Dave said. “What did the legal eagles of their day have to say?”

"John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, said, 'The jury has the right to judge both the law as well as the fact in controversy.'"

"More recently, Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said, 'The jury has the power to bring a verdict in the teeth of both the law and the facts,' meaning, they could disregard both the law and the evidence if they thought it was necessary."

"Harlan Stone, Chief Justice from 1941 to 1946 said, 'If a juror feels that the statute involved in any criminal offense is unfair, or that it infringes upon the defendant's natural God-given unalienable, or constitutional rights, then it is his duty to affirm that the offending statute is really no law at all and that the violation of it is no crime at all—for no one is bound to obey an unjust law...the law itself is on trial, quite as much as the cause which is to be decided.'"

"And, if you need something in your own lifetime, in 1972, the D.C. Court of Appeals ruled the jury has an '...unreviewable and irreversible power...to acquit in disregard of the instruction on the law given by the trial judge.'"

"In the defense of free speech, a free press, the right to bear arms, and many others causes, the world has become a better place to live because juries refused to convict the accused even though they had clearly broken the law."

"And in recent years juries have acquitted defendants who openly admitted violating laws they considered unjust. Homeschoolers, draft resisters, homosexuals, tax resisters, cancer patients who were arrested for marijuana use and possession, gun owners, and others who have had their rights trampled upon by our runaway government have managed to convince a jury that they were right and the government was wrong and the jury has acquitted them despite the fact that they had violated the law."

"If enough juries acquit defendants who have clearly violated a bad law, the State will eventually give up and quit trying to enforce that law."

"But you said the state now ensures that those who would question the law are not on juries."

"Yes, and that's something the American people have got to change."

"But aren't the courts, the Supreme Court in particular, really the ones who should determine what our rights are?" I asked.

"No. We have to hope that the courts will protect our rights, in accordance with the *Constitution*, but we should never lose sight of the fact that when we depend upon the courts, we are asking a *branch of the government* to interpret and make the determination what our rights are when those very rights are, in fact, *restraints against the government*."

"I never thought of it that way," Dave said.

"Freedom of speech, freedom of lawful assembly, and freedom of the press in the *First Amendment* are there so we can speak out against the government. The right to bear arms was intended primarily to counter government force. The guarantee of public trials, before juries of our peers, is there so that the government is not allowed to jail us, fine us, or execute us without our fellow citizens determining that it's the proper thing to do. In the end, we have to protect those rights ourselves. If we let the government be the final arbiter of our rights, then they are not rights at all; they're privileges."

"Furthermore, when we allow judges to instruct the jurors to bring verdicts of guilty, even when the law is wrong, he's trying to subvert the power of juries that was begun with the signing of the *Magna Carta* in 1215."

"Then who should interpret our rights?" I asked.

"The same people who have to die for them on battlefields," he said.

"You mean us," Dave said.

"But in this country, *the people are the government*," I countered.

"If that were true, the *Constitution* wouldn't be written the way it is," Mac said. "The Founding Fathers worded the *Constitution* the way they did because they were fully aware that the government and the people are not the same."

## Solutions

We were nearing Brookings and Dave said, "Ever since you started talking with us about these issues, you've included possible solutions. How should we go about trying to get jury nullification back in the courts?"

"Well, first, there should be *no* special courts without juries when our rights are at stake. That is, no IRS courts, no family courts, or any other courts without juries. Randomly drawn juries, taken from the citizenry, should hear all of the cases and be the ones to determine guilt or innocence. And guilty verdicts should have to be unanimous."

"Having so many jury trials would clog up the court system," I said. "It's already clogged enough as it is."

"Well, the most obvious thing that should be done to unclog the court system is to stop prosecuting victimless or consensual crimes. That would automatically put an end to 80 percent of all trials."

"Not only that," Dave said, "I find it difficult to swallow that judges, prosecutors, and politicians think we should be divested of our rights because it's *inconvenient* for them. If the job's too hard for them, let them find other jobs."

"I agree," Mac said.

"The second part of the solution," Mac continued, "would be to allow the defense, in a trial, the right to introduce the *Constitution of the*"

*The Coming American Dictatorship*  
is continued on page 96.

*The Coming American Dictatorship*  
is continued from page 56.

*United States* into evidence. Juries should not only be informed that the *Constitution* is the law of the land, but shown that it says so right in the document. Then juries should be allowed to consider the *Constitution* when judging both their fellow citizens and the law itself.

"Third, there should be no more jury stacking. Juries should be drawn randomly from the population and they should represent the population. They should not be hand picked by either the prosecution or the defense. They are, after all, supposed to be representing all of us.

"This joke called *voir dire* is supposed to remove prejudiced jurors from the jury system. But everyone, and I mean virtually everyone in the system, knows it does exactly the opposite. Every defense attorney wants jurors who will let his client off while every prosecutor wants only jurors who will convict. And the state itself, through the judge, wants people who will, as they say, 'bring a verdict of guilty if the prosecution proves his case, even if the jurors disagree with the law.'"

"You know," Dave said, "I've heard judges say that telling jurors they can judge the law is jury tampering."

"Jury tampering is when you either coerce or bribe a juror to arrive at a specific verdict," Mac said. "Notifying a juror of his rights and duties isn't tampering. If it were, I truly believe that Adams, Jefferson, and the others I mentioned earlier would have known it and would have opposed jury nullification themselves.

"On the other hand," he continued, "telling jurors they must determine guilt or innocence only by the facts in the case, and not telling them they have both the right and the duty to

judge the law, can be construed as tampering. It's lying to the jurors."

"And that puts the judge on the side of the prosecution," Dave said.

"That's right.

"So, no more tampering with the juries by the judges. Nor giving false instructions," Dave said.

"Right. Fourth, the jurors should know what sentence is going to be imposed if a verdict of guilty is brought. Would you bring a verdict of guilty for jaywalking if the penalty was a \$25 fine? How about if the penalty was 10 years in jail?

"Fifth, and this is a biggie, civics classes in schools should stress jury rights. In the name of being good citizens, everyone graduating from high school should know what his powers and responsibilities are as a voter and a juror.

"And finally, it would be nice if journalists would reveal the truth about juries. There should be segments on *60 Minutes*, *First Edition*, and the evening news until it becomes so commonplace, no one bothers to make a big deal of it. In fact, it would be nice if that fellow on *20/20*, John Stossel, would do a piece on jury nullification."

"So, this is your solution," Dave said.

"It's a start. When the average citizen understands his rights and responsibilities as a juror, laws that infringe upon our rights will be all but impossible to enforce. Anyone who is able to get the ear of a legislator to have a dumb law passed will find that their fellow citizens, through juries, are going to disregard them.

"But not only will special interests find themselves unable to dictate to the majority, there also will be no dictatorship of the majority as minorities will find themselves empowered.

"And the last thing that would make the court system fairer in this country is if every prospective juror would familiarize him or herself with the *Constitution*, and especially the first

10 Amendments—the *Bill of Rights*—before assuming jury duty. That way unconstitutional laws would be impossible to enforce."

We arrived at the restaurant, and as we got out of the car, Mac said, "If only one juror out of 12 says, 'This or that law infringes on our rights, so I'm not going to convict anybody of violating it,' then laws like that will go away."

"Can we make this an election issue?" Dave asked.

"I don't know. Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans want jury nullification. Both parties represent special interests that do not want the average citizen throwing cases out of court. But it would be worth a try."

"Where do you think the government will intrude into our lives next?" Dave asked.

"I already know. The Internet."

"The Internet?" I asked as we walked into the restaurant.

"Yes, the Internet may be the greatest freedom tool since the invention of the printing press, and you can bet there are going to be attempts to control it."

With that we sat down.

"Let's not start talking about the Internet until we order," Dave said.

And with that we ordered lunch. Δ

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In future issues Mac, John, and Dave will discuss how the government will eventually control the Internet, how the conversion of the military from a "citizen army" to a professional army is a danger to us all, and, though we don't like to admit it, why the United States is, in reality, now a fascist country.



# Build your own log home in the woods

## Part 2

(This is the second part of a three-part series. The third part will talk about building rafters and joists for the second floor and roof, and how to heat the log home.)

By Jackie Clay  
(Photos by Bill Spaulding)

In the last issue of *BHM*, we began this series on building your own log home with the selection of your home site, the drawing up of a floor plan, finding and peeling adequate logs to get started, gathering the necessary tools, and deciding on which joinery system of notches will work best. Now we're ready to start building that dream log home in the shadowy woods.

### Basic log building rules

There are three things you should keep in mind, at all times, when building with logs.

#### #1 Log buildings settle with time

No matter who argues with this statement, *all* log homes settle

because of their weight, the drying of the logs, and joinery systems closing. This is not a bad thing. In fact, it should be what makes a log home truly tight. (Yet, some "prefab kit" log home dealers insist that their log homes don't settle.)

When building, always think about what will happen when the entire wall settles some four inches or more. Don't spike stairways to the log wall, spike window frames to the logs, partition walls to the log walls, etc.

Well, how do you handle the joining of frame and log, then? It's pretty easy. You simply slot the window frame, stairway, or other frame member so that the spike, screw, or lag bolt holds the addition to the wall, but will allow the home to settle naturally. Even a 1x4 trim strip can hold a

log or portion of the wall from settling normally causing twisting, humping, and cracks to form between the logs.

#### #2 Logs are very heavy

Green logs are even heavier than dry logs, so always keep safety in mind. Sometimes one gets tired, working a longer day than they should, taking "short cuts" or hurrying too much. Never get in a position where if a log slips you (or your helpers) can get hit or crushed beneath a log. Always use log dogs to hold a log in place. These toothed iron bars are driven into the log ends to hold logs securely. Don't just pull a log into place and think, "Oh, it'll stay here." Maybe it will, but maybe it won't.

Use a forklift, tractor with a bucket, or crane to handle heavy logs, if at all possible. You can drag logs onto a wall with a horse or pickup, but it is more dangerous, so be extremely careful. Use steel cable or chains to draw the log with, not ropes that can break unexpectedly. And go slow, slow, slow.

#### #3 Any regular exposure to dampness will rot logs

During construction, always consider this. Keep water away from the lower logs by placing the house on a slight hill or by grading the earth away from the house. Use a roof overhang of at least three feet to protect the log walls from rain. I know it's cheaper to only have 18 inches of overhang because there's less roofing and less building materials, but taking the cheap way out will make you pay dearly in the years to come.

Before you actually begin building, take a couple more things into consideration. First of all, will you be doing a septic system? What about



*You can use conventional lumber for the ridge rafter. The gable ends will be sided with the log siding to match the log walls below. The insulation, conventional fiberglass batts, will be added from the inside.*



*Jackie's son, Bill Spaulding (with wheelbarrow), and friends pour the slab for his log home. Note the roughed-in plumbing and electric.*

water? Will you be laying up a massive chimney with a fireplace? These things need to be addressed *before* you begin building because they are quite easily allowed for before building, but hard to work in, later on.

For instance, you can rough in your septic line and water line, leaving a capped stub outside your building site. And, likewise, you can easily build your heavy footing for your chimney(s) before your home is started. It's much easier to work in the open than in a crawl space.

### **Footings: basement or concrete slab?**

There are several options when you build with log and all can work equally well in certain situations. In days past, nearly all log cabins were built on heavy stone footings. These held the cabin off the ground to save it from moisture. In most locations, rocks were easily obtained and were free. The problem with this was that rock footings usually only held the cabin a foot or so off the ground. And add to this the fact that they were seldom flat and you ended up with too much moisture in contact with the

lower logs and a rock or two that heaved out of place, allowing the cabin to sag.

Today, we can do better. We can dig out footings down to solid soil and pour concrete which we can level and reinforce with rebar. These footings can either be around the entire perimeter of the home or poured into

heavy round cardboard forms made for this purpose, often sold as Sonatubes. With these, you will only dig a round hole of the approximate diameter of your form, down about three feet to solid earth. Every six feet around the perimeter, place several rebar in each hole, extending up to the height necessary to receive your sill logs. Cement is poured to within a foot of the top of the hole. The cement is allowed to set up some, but *not* dry. Then the form is set into place, cut off at the point where it will create a level house floor, and the pour is completed.

Conventional footings can be solid poured concrete, formed up to *at least* 18 inches above ground level, or they can be mixed rock and concrete. Any time you only pour part of the foundation at a time, be sure to wet the dry cement before making the next pour to make sure you get good adhesion.

Always allow for at least one vent hole on opposing sides of the footing. These should be 8-inches square and must be covered by a screen to keep out critters. Without the vent holes, there will be too much dampness



*When over shoulder high, it's best to use mechanical help to raise heavy logs.*



under the house. I just visited such a log home that was only nine-years-old and the entire floor was rotted out.

You can also use concrete block for building a foundation on top of a dug footing filled with concrete. But a block foundation really needs to be faced with stone later on, as it doesn't look like it belongs with a log home.

Another type of footing for a log home is a "floating" slab. This works well when you can easily get a red-mix concrete truck to your home site. The site is squared, leveled, an 18-inch wide footing is dug down at least 12 inches around the perimeter, lined with rebar and 8 inches of washed gravel, and packed with a tamper (available at rental shops). Forms are laid around the slab. Rigid foam insulation board is laid on top of the gravel. As the concrete is poured, reinforcing mesh is embedded to provide strength.

Of course, the ultimate foundation for any log home is a basement, as it allows much storage of homestead food, gives additional room to the home and protection in storm-prone areas. The only drawback to a basement is the cost of materials and labor.

No matter which type of foundation/footing you choose for your home, be sure to sink some anchor bolts every six feet or so along the top of the perimeter to allow the sill logs to be bolted securely to the concrete.

The experts say that you should wait a week before beginning construction, but they must work a lot faster than we do. I believe that in two days of decent drying, you can begin laying up logs. (We never have a crew and are slow builders. If we get more than a single course of logs up in a day we are amazed.)

## Laying up logs

If at all possible, make sure that your sill logs are full-length logs. The sill is your home's footing, and it



*In this other log home, note the log purlin and rafter construction. Also note the excellent overhang to protect the logs below from moisture.*

should be as solid and square as you can possibly make it. Therefore we like to bolt it down, using sill sealer as a gasket, and we use very good logs for this application.

There are two schools of thought regarding the sill logs. Some folks split the "short side" log exactly in half, either with a chalk line and chain saw or take it to a saw mill. This way the sill logs all sit flat on the footing.

Other people insist on using full diameter logs for all the sill logs and just build up the footing under the logs which sit half a log above the footing after notching.

We've done it both ways and lean toward cutting the short side sill log in half as it makes a cleaner, flatter appearing sill.

You can either build your floor next (if you are not building on a slab) or save it until your home is dried in. You can even build the entire floor before you start laying up logs. If you completely build your rough floor on the footing, you could end up with weathered and warped flooring if it takes a year or more to dry in the home. On the other hand, building the floor first gives you something solid to stand and work on as you build,

especially if you are building on a higher crawl space. When building on a full basement, you should nail up your joists and subfloor, as you would do if you were building any other type of house. You'll have to weigh the pros and cons for yourself.

As you lay your sill logs into place, they will (or at least should) be teetering on the anchor bolts you have set into the concrete of the footing. Here a helper or two is great. You will need to balance the log exactly in place and then walk the distance of the log, whacking down over each place where an anchor bolt rests underneath. This will leave neat imprints of each spaced bolt, allowing you to accurately drill a hole to receive each bolt.

Bore out each hole, then replace the drill bit with a paddle drill of a size that will let you countersink each washer and nut so that as you tighten up the sill log, each nut will rest below the surface of the log. Yep, this takes time. Sorry. It is necessary, and will do a lot to make your new home solid on its foundation, no matter what severe winds blow in the future.

Lay the two opposing sill logs, i.e., the east and west or north and south, first. The butts should be at opposite

ends. Then cut your notches for the other two sill logs. Take your time here, as the sill is very important and you probably won't be experienced in log building, yet.

It will probably take you at least two days to lay and bolt your sill logs. Measure carefully, level well, and your new home is off to a great start.

At this point, you must make the decision as to whether or not you will be chinking your home. If you use the Swedish cope method of joinery, you will carefully cut a "V" shaped hollow on the lower surface of the logs, which fits snugly down on top of the log below it. Yes, this does take time, but so does chinking the entire home, inside and out, later on. And that chinking is pretty pricey. For this rea-

son, we prefer to use saddle or A and V-notches and Swedish cope joinery. It does take more initial time, but makes an economical, very air-tight home. So, in this article, to save space, we'll assume you're using this type of joinery.

Remember as you lay up logs to alternate butt and top ends of the logs to keep the wall level.

Now if your home is modest in size and you have plenty of long, straight logs of minimum taper, you can simply stack logs, notching as you go, until you reach the top of your wall. However, in most cases you don't have that option. It is a lot easier to find shorter, nice straight pieces of log. So a log builder can add window and door openings on each wall, making the need for full-length logs much less pressing. I like to use full length logs for the top two logs of the wall, as well as the sill logs because the entire building seems more stable and secure.

In the same manner, I really hate to splice logs in a wall, so try to sort out the pile into three categories as full length, "pretty darned long," and shorter logs. If a log absolutely needs to be spliced, a lap joint of at least two feet is strong.

When using short logs between door and window openings, be sure you have a very close match in size on all short logs on this course, in order to keep your wall level.

To scribe a saddle notch, eyeball the log for bows or twists, centering the log on the wall, and resting it on the two opposing lower logs. Then, using dividers or a notch gauge, carefully scribe, slowly following the curve of the lower log, scratching or drawing the exact curve on the bottom of the upper log. Mark both ends before moving the log.

Then roll the log over and cut your notch, but cut just a little shy of the mark. When the notch is cut, carefully scribe down the entire length of the bottom of the top log with a notching

gauge. Then hollow out a semi-wide "V" using the scribe lines as guides. Some log builders use a chain saw entirely for this "cup." Others use a curved adz and an axe. Use what works best for you.

It'll take another fitting or two to get it right, but soon you'll have a perfectly fitting top log that will sit down firmly on the lower log. At this point, roll it back up and add a strip of sphagnum moss or insulation material and settle the log into its permanent position. If necessary, "help" it settle down by giving it a few strategic whacks with a sledge hammer along the length.

Some log builders add spikes, with the heads countersunk, every two feet or so. I really prefer to use few spikes and let the weight and joinery hold the house square. *Never* spike logs together without countersinking the heads, because as the logs dry and settle those spikes will protrude and not allow the house to settle as it should.

As you add window and door openings in your wall, you can *temporarily* tack 2x8s to frame the opening and hold the logs in position as you finish building. But when you finish your walls, go back and pull each frame and cut a notch into each upright side, fitting a 2x4 loosely into the resulting slot. By nailing or bolting each log through this slot, they will be allowed to settle as needed, while keeping the wall straight and secure in place. The window frames are then fastened to these 2x4s.

Be sure to leave a 4-inch space above every frame to allow for inevitable settling. This can be hidden by a 1x6 trim strip until settling is finished, which usually happens within two years. Without this space, you will soon have windows and doors that are hard or impossible to open, cracked window glass, and an unhappy family.

Try to keep the walls completely level and plumb. Make constant use



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*Jackie's son, Bill, rests after a long day of building his log home.*

of a level, using the center of the log to level from (not the top, which tapers). Taking a few minutes every course to drop a plumb bob down the center of each end will save much wailing and gnashing of the teeth later on, when a slanted wall is discovered. All logs are not straight, nor are all logs the exact same diameter or size. I like to try to keep the centers plumb, regardless of the rest of the log. Some folks try to keep the inside logs even, all up the wall, but I personally feel that keeping the centers plumb makes a stronger house.

As you get higher on the walls, you'll need a power source to raise the logs above your head, especially if you're using large diameter, full-length logs weighing several hundred pounds each. You can use two heavy poles, spiked onto the top logs as a ramp, to help roll the logs onto the wall. At first, a couple of strong people can shove them into place. But as the wall becomes higher and higher, you'll need a tractor with a bucket, forklift, or crane to lift those heavy logs with safety.

You can drag them up the "ramp" with a chain and a horse (or team), tractor, or pickup, but for goodness sake, **be careful.**

If you are planning on a second floor or a loft, this is the time to build in your floor joists, by notching the logs every two feet along the second to last log on the wall. Notch them 18 inches on center if you are unable to use logs at least 6 inches in diameter or if your home has few supporting room divisions. It's a good idea to flatten the tops of these logs, either by chain saw or sawmill, to allow for more nailing room when nailing the floor/ceiling planks in place.

To gain more room in the loft or second floor, stack a few feet of log above the floor joists, making a knee wall for the second story. This will result in nearly twice as much usable room upstairs. Our first homestead had a 4-foot log knee wall, which worked very well.

Your log house rises one course at a time. Then, seemingly all of a sudden, it is eight-feet high, nearly a house. Because the more log building experience you have, the quicker your joinery will be, the higher you get, the better you'll be at notching. If you've built another structure or two, your building will go

together quickly, once the actual stacking starts.

## The beginnings of the roof

Many homes are made or ruined in the roof construction. And there are

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many good designs and methods of putting a roof together. Like the rest of the house, keep it level, plumb, solid, and built to allow for settling.

One good method uses log gable ends, the gable end being the triangular section of the house on either end of the house above the rectangular log "crib." Logs are cut long enough to allow for the final trim to angle off the roof. These logs are cut with a Swedish cope on the underside, just

as the house wall logs were. By drilling through the logs at two-foot intervals, the builder can pin the courses together with steel rods or wooden pegs, always cut short enough to be driven into each log far enough that when shrinkage and settling occur they will not hang logs up. Alternately spaced pins work well. You can pin two or more logs together in this way, building a secure, strong gable that can settle with the rest of the house, remaining tight.

Keep in mind, as you lay up your gable ends, that the steeper your roof is, the better snow and rain will leave it. But also remember that the steeper the roof is, the harder and more dangerous it will be to work on.

Depending on their widths, one or two purlins (full length logs running lengthwise of the house) are notched into the gable logs, 1/2 or 1/3 of the way from the wall to the ridge pole. As you build, you'll end up with one or two purlins on each side of a ridge pole, which is also full length. Be sure to allow enough length of these logs to allow at least a three-foot overhang on each end of the house, to protect the logs from moisture. The purlins and the ridge pole will support the rafters and the roof. If the house is over 30 feet long, it is well to support the ridge pole, and purlins with a truss or solid dividing wall.

Rafters can be added when the ridge pole and purlins are in place. By locking each rafter into the top sill

of the wall by use of both notches and steel pins (again, countersunk and placed in drilled holes to allow movement), a six-inch slot above each purlin to allow movement as the rafter is nailed through the saw cut and four inches between the tops of opposing rafters, the entire roof is allowed to settle comfortably with the house. Any attempt to prevent settling in a newly built log home will result in unhappy builders.

Once the rafters are in place, snap a chalk line down the gable ends, perfectly matching the angle of the rafters. (Use a spare pole as a guide, taking care to get it *exactly* level with the rafters.) The gable ends are further strengthened by nailing roof decking to them, as well as the rafters.

## Chimneys and fireplaces

Before actually roofing your home (I know you'll be in a hurry here, as it actually looks like a home now), consider where your chimneys will be for your heating and/or cooking. True, you can get by with Metalbestos or even regular stove pipe, but chimneys are definitely safer, especially for a heating stove.

It's a lot easier to lay up a fireplace or chimney while you are building rather than hacking it in after you get done with most of your construction. Such things as adding headers to support your roof decking, flashing between roofing and chimney, and ease of access all make solid arguments for building fireplaces and chimneys as you build, especially when it comes to roofing.

Remember way back when you dug your footings, you've already added a reinforced thick concrete base for any fireplaces or chimneys. Just as that was provident, building the fireplace and chimney as you build your home just plain makes good sense.

While building chimneys and your fireplace, take special care that you again allow for the settling of the

home. Many homes have been made ugly by logs hanging up on stonework and masonry. You can use “floating” metal straps to tie the chimneys to the log walls, but *never* directly fasten a chimney to the wall or it will cause problems. (Yes, I know it was done a hundred years back on countless log cabins. But these were generally small structures, having much less settling. And I can take you to dozens of old log cabins with severe sagging and hang-up problems that eventually wrecked them.)

The roof can be constructed of full dimension, rough sawed lumber or planed, tongue and groove 2x6 decking. If you use rough lumber and plan to use this as the ceiling to let you view the log purlins and rafters, be sure to lay tar paper over the roof decking, as the cracks will show insulation above. (Who wants to look up to pink or baby blue above the cracks in that beautiful, rustic ceiling?)

From here, you can go one of two ways: you can lay rigid two-inch (or thicker) foam insulation on the roof decking, add  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch plywood to sandwich it in, then screw metal roofing down using long enough roofing screws with rubber gaskets to firmly lock down the whole works. Or you can lay 2x8 (minimum) lumber on edge over each rafter, with pink fiberglass insulation placed in each space, topped with rough-sawed 1-inch lumber and the roofing material of your choice: metal roofing or shingles.

Of course, there are plenty of other roof construction methods, including using trusses, regular dimension lumber instead of log rafters, using a heavy ridge pole and steep rafters; no purlins, etc. Study what others have done and decide for yourself.

One huge hint: when building in the woods, opt for metal roofing. Nowadays it's pretty, coming in brown, forest green, and tile red instead of shiny (ugly) aluminum, so it complements the house. But more

than that, it's *fireproof* and has saved many homes during forest fires and chimney fires. It also lets heavy snow loads slide easily off the roof, making ice dams and leaking roofs during the winter a thing of the past.

And, please, don't use wood shakes for the roof of your log home. I know they are artistic, free (if you split them yourself), and last a long time. But they burn. I know. I had a chimney fire once due to a malfunctioning oil furnace, and I spent one very scary hour alone on a winter night, on a three story house, putting out several merrily burning spots on a shake-roofed house.

Obviously, due to space constraints, you'll have to do extra reading as you prepare to actually build. The books listed in the previous article, as well as others from your local library or bookstore, will be of invaluable aid. Just remember, thousands and thousands of plain, common folks just like you and I have built successfully with log. Never give in to the idea that log building is just too difficult for you to actually do.

It will take time, from perhaps a year to three or four to completely finish. And sometimes you'll get discouraged and wish you'd never started. But I guarantee that if you stick with it, you'll end up with a very economical home, the likes of which few people ever even dare dream of.

In the next issue, we'll finish up your backwoods log home, putting in windows and doors, adding a half log stairway to the loft and begin a porch so you'll have a place to sit and rest when it's all finished. And much, much more. Δ

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*Baskets of fresh vegetables is what gardening is all about. Sprigs of basil make this a garden feast.*

*By Alice Brantley Yeager  
(Photos by James O. Yeager)*

**M**any people dream of breaking away from their present surroundings and going to a simpler lifestyle. They're tired of congested cities, industrial pollution, crime, crowded schools, and the whole miserable mess. They want some control over the quality of the food they eat. They want to breathe fresh air and hear owls, whippoorwills, crickets, and other country night noises instead of the rush of traffic intermingled with sirens. Sorry to say, I can't offer a quick solution, but I can give some practical advice to those who have a bent toward gardening and a desire to have their own place free of city shackles.

As the population expands, it's becoming harder to find acreage

where we can establish a home and "live off the land" in the fashion of our pioneering ancestors. Newcomers shooting game from their cabin doorways, as the pioneers were often apt to do, is now a no-no. Chances are, the game may turn out to be someone's 4H project grazing on the range.

Food supply is one of the main things a person needs to think about when mulling over the possibilities of seeking a more satisfying lifestyle. If you can't detach yourself from the supermarket, you may as well stay where you are. However, if you long for fresh vegetables out of your own garden and maybe a dozen or so laying hens, then begin to plan for a better life in an area that appeals to you. While you're planning, take time to learn something about preserving food—i.e., canning, freezing, and

dehydrating. This knowledge is invaluable if you want to make good use of your garden's surplus.

Thoroughly investigate your dream spot. You might decide to select another. All over the United States there are fertile areas. Old timers call them garden strips. Things may not be perfect in these locales, but growing conditions are far better than where gardeners have to wage a constant battle with the elements to raise anything at all. I admire people who persevere with their hillside plots and clay soil, their rocky and windswept locations, but somehow I don't have the desire to go there. Maybe I've grown accustomed to the garden strip in my own part of the world—Southwest Arkansas, Zone 8—and experience has taught me to appreciate this strip despite its shortcomings, mainly summer's heat and humidity





*If you haven't tasted black-eyed peas fresh from the garden, then cooked with bacon drippings and served with hot corn bread, you have missed a real treat.*

with chiggers thrown in for good measure.

Garden strips are not limited as to size, but they all have things in common. They are blessed with good climates and they are natural pockets of fertility. Many strips are valleys lying alongside rivers and lakes. Others have no water sources in sight except for wells under pressure. Rain can be expected at certain times of the year and, when dry spells come along, mulched gardens can be maintained with a minimum of watering. With a little effort, gardeners have the opportunity of raising much of their own food free of pesticides and chemicals. The term "wresting a living from the soil" doesn't apply if you live in a garden strip.

Folks with home gardens are not the only ones who benefit from being more located within a fertile area. Many large farms producing corn, wheat, soybeans, cotton, etc., are there, too. In the South, particularly, it is often necessary for the big farms to implement their irrigation systems during a drought just as gardeners resort to sprinklers, water hoses, and buckets. It isn't practical for the agri-farmers to mulch their fields, but we

gardeners can prolong having to water our plants by putting down substantial mulch in anticipation of the almost inevitable dry period. We have learned by experience to beware of our hottest months (usually July and August) and prepare ahead.

Novices to independent living should actually visit the area they're considering and find out if there is much gardening or farming going on. The local county extension office is a good place to start. Those folks are in a position to answer almost any questions a newcomer might have. However nothing beats talking with residents who have lived there for several years. Gardeners love to tell you about their triumphs and failures. From them you can get a good idea of what to expect if you pull up stakes and make your move.

Another good place to check out what is being grown successfully in an area is the local farmer's market. Or, perhaps there are roadside stands where you can get a look at local produce. Sometimes, folks just put a sign on a gate—"Peaches, Pick Your Own;" "Beans, Tomatoes, Okra;" "Sweet Corn." Nothing fancy, but the signs convey the message that fresh,

home-raised fruits and vegetables are for sale.

Be sure to ask about plant diseases in the area. Is it hard to raise a good crop of cabbage? If so, clubroot may be the culprit. This soil-borne fungus disease can live for years and attack all members of the cabbage family. Are baskets of plump tomatoes your goal? Better check out the varieties that do best in the area. In our garden it's almost impossible to raise any of the old heirloom varieties, so we order disease resistant seed. Even so, we haven't conquered Southern Blight yet. That's another soil-borne fungus disease. The list goes on and on, but the point I want to make is to ask questions about everything if you want to enhance your life by growing your own produce.

Gardeners have to be concerned with climate, soil, and rainfall. If one of those is lousy, living off the land may not be easy. By the same token, any area has its ups and downs. A bad gardening year doesn't mean all future years will be like that. However look out if information seems to point to a good year as a rarity. For instance, if everyone remembers 1995 as the best yielding time



*One should also give thought to planting some berries if space allows.*

ever and they don't recall any other year that brought in such great beets, peas, strawberries, etc., you'll know good years are few and far between.

Climate is a big factor, particularly if you would like to get away from long winters and be able to enjoy the outdoors without danger of slipping on ice. There are lots of garden strips across the southern part of the United States where climate allows one to indulge in gardening almost all year long. Our coldest months are January and February. Frost-hardy spring crops can be planted much earlier in Zones 8 and 9 than in Zone 7 and northward. Summer vegetables blend

and, with the assistance of new garden wish books, we enjoy planning spring gardens.

This is not to say that wonderful gardens are not to be had in the North as well as other places. I have seen some picture-perfect vegetables in farmers markets and roadside stands where the spring frost dates are later than ours resulting in a shorter



*Potatoes dug from one's own patch are far superior in taste to the ones we find in the supermarket.*



*Consider planting fruit trees. But check out local disease factors. For instance fire blight, a bacterial disease spread by insects and wind-blown rain, can wipe out certain varieties.*

in as the spring ones play out and, when the hot season wanes, we plant fall crops. At Christmas, we often have fresh salad greens from our gardens. Then comes the lull of winter

growing season. Generally speaking, northern home gardens appear fresh in the middle of the summer whereas our southern gardens may look a bit ragged. Northern gardeners raise delicious English peas, rhubarb, asparagus, and cauliflower, but southerners revel in their okra, watermelons, black-eyed peas, and tomatoes. When Jack Frost begins his annual descent from north to south, it's curtains for the North, whereas our southern gardens will produce on into winter.

If climate suits one's desires, how about the soil? Is it sandy loam but sprinkled prominently with large stones? Are rock walls (sometimes called fences) common in the area? If so, you can bet those walls didn't just assemble on their own as natural boundaries. Someone, painstakingly carted each stone off of the land in order to clear it for crops or pastures. There are probably more underlying stones where those came from. Rocks can be very scenic, but not when you're trying to establish a working relationship with the soil.

If you have settled on a particular place that seems to be what you want, look over the spot where you'd like to plant a garden and ask the extension agent to run a soil test for you. In so doing, you'll probably pick up some additional information about the area. (Lucky you if the garden spot is in cultivation and you can see first hand what is being grown.) Remember, with the tilling under of leaves, grass clippings, straw, etc., almost any soil may be improved.

Beware of heavy clay soils, as those are the most difficult to work with. Clay is composed of very fine particles with little space between them making it hard for roots to penetrate. If you rub a bit of the wet soil between your fingers, you will find it has a gooey, slippery feel. (Potters are the only people I know who can truly appreciate clay.) Clay soil may be improved with the addition of organic material, as stated above, but it can't be done overnight and sometimes takes years.

Opposite to clay soil is sandy soil. This one has comparatively large particles and feels rough when rubbed between the fingers. Water passes through sandy soil very quickly making it a poor moisture and nutrient retainer. It's not much good for gardening.



Loamy soil is betwixt and between clay and sandy soil in structure having enough air spaces between soil particles to allow roots to spread out. In addition, loam has moderate drainage, but holds nutrients and moisture so that plant roots get a chance to absorb them. Loam is the best soil for gardening and continuous addition of compost or mulch keeps it in good shape.

Brochures distributed by tourist bureaus are little if any help when it comes to learning anything about the fertility of backyard gardens. The information centers are more involved in the publicity angle and being a drawing card for economic reasons. So, don't be fooled by photos of beautiful landscapes, amusement parks, and bass fishermen. Again, talk with the real folks who live in the area. They're the ones with basic knowledge. In this time of computers it's easy to get information before actually visiting your intended new area, but nothing beats personal inspection.

Usually, if soil is fertile, rainfall will be a contributing factor. However, every garden strip area is subject to disaster either in the lack of rainfall or too much of it. At least the gardener tilling a plot of a quarter



*Winter squash can provide variety for cold weather meals.  
The squash will keep for two to three months if kept in a cool room.*

acre or less stands a better chance of controlling the fate of his/her garden.

Never plan a garden in a flat spot where water can stand. You'll never be able to raise a bean there and, chances are, the soil is going to be well packed. Always select a location with enough slope to it to assure the survival of plants in case of torrential downpours. Plants standing with their roots submerged in water for several days don't produce the best of crops. Even though our raised beds drain well, we recently had trouble with our cucumber vines because of too much cloudiness and rain over several

days. This was due to Allison, the tropical depression that dumped 36 inches of rain on Houston, Texas, in early June 2001. (We are located 300 miles north of Houston.) You never know what Mother Nature has in her bag of tricks, so be prepared if possible.

Gardens need to be open to at least 6-7 hours of sun

per day. Tall trees or buildings can cast shade cutting off sunlight. Trees, if near to the garden, can sap the soil of nutrients and moisture that should belong to the garden plants alone. Be sure that your intended garden spot is in an open space.

It's one thing to see a TV comedy about a city couple being duped into buying their dream home in the country, but it's another to let it happen to you.

So, if you're a novice at gardening, but are determined to live a less stressful and better life somewhere with your own place, check out the gardening possibilities first and find out if the area is compatible with your desires. But don't leap from the frying pan into the fire and buy a place sight unseen. There are still many good places left where someone with a pioneering spirit may put down roots and enjoy a slower paced life, but they're going faster than we like to think. Δ



*Jersey Wakefield cabbage just beginning to head. To help avoid club root, a soil-borne disease, don't plant members of the cabbage family in the same place each year.*

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# This coop is for the birds:

## Mattie Sue, Splatty-Goo, and Fu-man-choo

By Dorothy Ainsworth

**Y**ou can buy a dozen eggs at the supermarket for 99 cents, or you can go out to the chicken coop you built and fetch a warm egg out of the soft pine wood shavings in the nesting box—and that's priceless.

Every day I gently carry my three brown eggs into the house marveling all the way to the refrigerator. Maybe I'm a hopeless romantic, but I love my three old hens—Mattie Sue, Splatty-Goo, and Fu-man-choo.

Chickens are delightful characters. They're colorful and animated and a constant source of entertainment. They peck and scratch and strut around kinda jerky, like in an old-time silent movie. But it's their cackling I enjoy the most. My favorite sound resembles the long drawn out inhaling effort of old Aunt Ruby when she choked on cake crumbs at the family reunion.



*Basic frame with temporary braces and the rafters*

While one hen is laying, the other two hover around like midwives “egging her on.” Then they all join in the celebration by clucking and hiccupping and “doing the Aunt Ruby.” After the deed is done, they ruffle

their feathers, take a dust bath, dig a crater in the cool dirt for an afternoon snooze, eat a few worms, then go to bed early. It's the good life.

One of the best reasons for keeping your own chickens, and feeding them a varied diet that includes table scraps, is the quality of the eggs. The dark gold yolks and firm whites are so fresh they even squawk when you fry 'em.

Chickens are low-maintenance pets, inexpensive to feed, and they give back that little prize every day. All they ask for in return is a light and airy shelter, kept clean and dry and safe. They like a little shade in the summer and warmth in the winter, just like the rest of us.

### Building a coop

Build this sturdy, attractive coop designed for three or four fine feathered fowl, and you, too, can enjoy the good life.



*A side view showing the finished chicken coop with its door for my entry*





*Front view of chicken coop*

The materials cost \$250 total, but you can improvise to fit your budget. Save money every step of the way by scrounging scrap lumber, using painted plywood for siding and doors, and 1x4s to frame the run.

## Picking a spot to build

Start by picking a spot with wind protection, some shade, and good drainage. Level an 8-foot by 14-foot pad as best you can. Lay the 4x4s

down in troughs filled with gravel to form a 6-foot by 12-foot rectangle, divided at 4 feet for the house, and 8 feet for the run. Build up the low ends with flat rocks or scraps of concrete and, of course, level the parallel beams with each other. (Use a *long level*). Toenail all the 4x4s to each other at 90 degree angles, remembering the

golden rule of carpentry: "Plumb, level, and square."

## Framing and roofing

Frame the henhouse walls one section at a time on the ground, then stand them up and screw them into the foundation beams (the 4x4s).

The rear wall consists of five 5-foot vertical studs at 18-inch centers capped by 6-foot top and bottom plates. The front wall consists of four

6-foot studs at 18-inch centers also capped by 6-foot plates, but without the middle stud for now. That 36-inch gap will be spanned by a horizontal 2x4 installed as the window sill, 15 inches down from the top plate. Support underneath the sill, in the middle, with a vertical 2x4 cut to fit (about 55½ inches). Now frame in the little 18-inch square hen door by fastening a horizontal 2x4 between two studs, to create the passageway from coop to run.

Plumb and brace the two parallel walls with temporary diagonal braces, and install the four rafters (with pre-cut birdsmouths) at 2-foot centers. Allow a 14-inch overhang at the front and a 4-inch overhang at the back.

Frame the sides with studs cut to the roof angle, leaving a 20-inch door opening. Screw two 7-foot 2x4 diagonals onto the front and rear walls inside the coop to stiffen the structure and support the roosts. Notch them out at 12-inch centers to hold three 2-inch branches or dowels that will step up to the top roost (their favorite). The roosts must be round for feet to grasp and breasts to rest on.

Roof with plywood, tarpaper, and shingles. Install all the cedar siding,

### List of materials:

- (1) 8-foot 4x4, pressure treated
- (4) 12-foot 4x4s, pressure treated
- (6) 8-foot 2x4s, to make five 8-footers and two 4-footers
- (4) 10-foot 2x4s, to make eight 5-footers
- (10) 12-foot 2x4s, to make twenty 6-footers
- (6) 12-foot 1x4s, utility grade is fine
- (2) 12-foot 2x6s, to make four 6-footers (tongue-and-groove, Douglas fir or pine) for door
- (50) 6-foot 1x6s, cedar fencing (pecky-utility is cheap)
- (1) 4x8 sheet of 5/8-inch plywood (CDX is fine)
- (1) Roll 1-inch chicken wire, 50-foot x 4-foot
- Tarpaper and shingles to cover 40 sq. ft. of roof
- 4 or 5 hinges and 2 latches (for 2 doors)
- Sheetrock screws or galvanized nails (3-inch for framing, 2-inch for siding)
- 1 quart of stain



*The nesting box is next to the door for ease in reaching in and grabbing the eggs.*



*Five p.m. and the girls are already "in bed."*

the outside corner trim, and fascia boards to cover the rafter tails.

Frame the run with three upright 40-inch 4x4s in the front, toenailed in from every angle, and horizontal 2x4s for the top.

## Predators

Line the run and the henhouse sub-floors (dirt) with chicken wire, attaching it to the insides of the 4x4s with staples. This important step will foil any attempts of predatory critters from digging under the foundation in hopes of a juicy chicken dinner. Now fill the coop and run with nice earthy soil to the tops of the 4x4s.

Screen the 15-inch by 36-inch window opening with chicken wire and frame around it with trim. Cover the sides and top of the run with chicken wire and staple it all securely with hammer-in type chicken-wire staples. (Don't use little staple-gun staples that the chickens might eat.)

## Finishing the inside

Build-in-place an 18-inch square nesting box by the door, about 6 inches off the dirt floor. Trim the front with a 2-inch lip so the eggs won't roll out. Three or four hens will share one nesting box.

Build the main door out of 2x6 tongue-and-groove using clamps to squeeze the four boards tightly together until you get the paired-up battens bolted through on both sides of the door.

Measure the door opening for the run (between two upright 4x4s) and make the door out of two identical 1x4 frames sandwiched together using glue as the mayo with chicken wire in between. Screw together every few inches all around.

Hang the doors and install the latches. If you use a gate latch on the main door, attach a shoe-string to the catch lever and thread it through a hole drilled to the inside of the coop, **before** you lock yourself in. (I learned the hard way.)

Now for the fun part. Go to the Grange and buy a galvanized chicken feeder and waterer, a big bag of layer-feed, a bag of scratch (cracked corn and grain), grit for their gizzards, and some oyster shell bits for calcium. You'll also need straw or pine wood shavings to spread around everywhere to facilitate cleaning the pen every month or so.

You'll have no trouble finding mature hens for sale cheap, or for free. Your happy hens will love their new "mansion."

If you're anything like me, you'll take great pleasure in imitating chicken sounds every time you go out to the coop. Don't be shy—unless, of course, somebody is listening. Δ

One of the most compelling self-reliance dramas of the last 20 years. Read Dorothy Ainsworth's log home series: [www.backwoodshome.com](http://www.backwoodshome.com).



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# Tips and handy hints for 4X4 living



*Where Jackie Clay lives, a 4X4 is essential.*

*By Jackie Clay*

**A**fter spending more than 35 years living in homesteads that were so out of the way that we were snowed in for six months out of the year or, at the very least, living on roads that were inhospitable to normal vehicle traffic, you might say I've had a little experience with four-wheel drive.

No, I don't race in four-wheel drive rallies, go mud bogging on the weekends, or own a monster truck. But we do own and use a beat-up Chevy pickup with four-wheel drive every day, from muddy summer to snow-bound winter. You see, at our house, which is six miles from a plowed

road, up two pretty awe-inspiring mountain switchbacks of two-rut trail, a four-wheel drive truck is not a play thing, but a vital tool of our very lives.

And I'll bet a lot of self-reliant folks are in the same boat with us. We haul wood, hay, and feed for our animals, building materials, water (in a 200-gallon polytank), haul out game animals harvested at hunting season, pull out stuck neighbors, even if they live a few miles away, and much more. At our place, a two-wheel drive truck is out of the question. It would be deadly dangerous to drive one up here in the Big Belt Mountains.

But just owning a 4X4 is not enough. It takes plenty of know-how

and seat-of-the-pants instinct to get the most out of one.

## **Choosing a four-wheel drive for backroad use**

There are a lot of four-wheel drive vehicles out there today. But they are definitely not equal. A Jeep will get you in and out just fine, but I wouldn't choose one for homestead use. We need one for hauling. Not only do we haul using the box, but we pull a 16-foot stock trailer, as well. For this much utility, you need a pickup, preferably a three quarter ton pickup. A smaller vehicle, such as a Chevy S10, doesn't have the power or weight to constantly carry a big load or pull a large trailer, especially over less than adequate roads.





*Step 1: To chain up, first lay the chain out in front of the tire. Do a set at the same time, or all four. Then drive onto the chain as shown.*

I've seen a lot of folks out here in the mountains of Montana and elsewhere trying to get by with an all-wheel-drive SUV or mini-van. And I've pulled a lot of them out of the ditch, too. Our truck is our only vehicle and it works like a horse. But you can't expect a pony to do the work of a horse.

When choosing a four-wheel drive pickup, go for tough and mechanically sound over "fancy" or "pretty." Chrome won't get you out of a mud hole. Nor will that awesome stereo. You don't need a "monster truck" or extra wide tires. We're talking about utility here.

As for make, everyone has their preference, and I won't argue for my choice. They are all good if taken care of well. I shy away from diesels, as they can get stubborn about starting in extremely cold weather, even with modern glow plugs, and I can't take the noise and smell. But again, that's your choice.

## Tires?

I like a 10-ply, good quality (but not pricey) relatively aggressive tread mud/snow tire that is also acceptable on the highway, as we live over 50

miles from a city. Notice that I say 10-ply, not 10-ply rated. Big difference when you drive a lot of terrible trails year-round. (Not only do we *live* in a remote area, but we spend a lot of time driving places "normal" humans wouldn't think of driving. We explore hundreds of miles of Montana's National Forests every year.)

With less than 10-ply tires, you'll have a lot of stone cuts and bruises, poke studs through tires, and be pretty unhappy. We drive 'em nearly bald and very seldom have a flat, and when we do it's usually a wire or nail.

You don't need pretty white letters. Our ugly black tires roll right past those sexy

tires on trucks stuck on forest service roads.

Carry a good spare—two if you're in really remote country. We helped a hunter once who had blown *two* tires on rocks, and he was 60 miles from a service station. Luckily, he was driving a truck that was able to use one of our spares to get him out.

Be sure you have a four-way tire iron, a chunk of pipe to use as an extension just in case that air wrench had more muscle than you do, and a good jack. Most folks who run the back country carry a high-lift jack. That's not to look macho. Sometimes you get so stuck you *need* lots of lift to get out. Jacks are not just for changing flats. Four-wheel drives are great, but when they get stuck, they *really* get stuck.



*Step 2: Pull the chain up over the top of the tire. Then tighten the chain with tightener plates or heavy bungees. The author is shown here getting the truck ready to buck snow and ice.*

## Miscellaneous 4X4 gear

A good winch can be a life-saver. If you buy a winch for the front end of your pickup, get a good, heavy-duty one, capable of hauling either your truck out of a major mess or helping get someone else out. You don't want a lightweight toy. A snapping winch cable is deadly.

Our truck has both a C.B. and a cell phone. (We are so far off the beaten path we have no other phone, so for us a cell phone is "normal" not "fancy.") We have both given help and received help using both.

Carry at least one shovel. Getting unstuck is much easier when you have something to dig with. And during forest fire season, a shovel is a necessity in the woods. Last summer, with Montana burning, we also included a tank of water and other fire-fighting gear.

We always carry a 20-foot tow chain. Seldom does a month go by that we don't pull someone out of a stuck-hole or ditch. And if *we* should get stuck, we know it'll be a lot easier to get pulled out if we have a chain. Not everyone with a 4X4 carries one; they can't help you if no one has a chain.

## Tire chains

If you travel off the roads, you might be able to get by not using tire chains. If you *live* off the roads, you need a full set of chains for your 4X4. While a four-wheel drive truck is pretty good in lousy weather, chaining up all the way around makes it get up and go.

Normally, only one set of chains will get you in and out comfortably. But when things get really hairy, you'll need a set for both front and rear tires. This way, all four tires will pull with minimal slipping.

The chains will also help prevent sliding down slick trails, possibly averting disaster.

Normally, one thinks of tire chains for winter driving. But we've used them a lot during the summer on slick mountain trails. You don't want to drive a chained-up truck in soup, as you will destroy a trail. But when things get slick, a set of chains will let you creep along, leaving only little marks instead of deep ruts from spinning. We don't drive when we will rut up the roads. Erosion caused by poorly driven 4X4s is unforgivable.

Don't skimp when buying tire chains for your truck. Get heavy, studded chains. Forget cables and other car tire gear. We've got a set with plate tighteners on six places around the tire. You can put a ratchet extension in the center and reef the chains really tight in seconds. And tight tire chains don't slip off, break, or slap fenders.

When buying chains, also get a couple extra hooks and repair links to carry with you.

Most tire chains require bungee cords to keep tight. As with the chains, don't skimp. Buy good, black rubber bungees, at least two for each tire. Cheap bungees will break and only last a few uses.

## Using tire chains

The ideal chaining up area is a flat, dry, clear area. In such a place, you can be chained up on all four in 15 minutes. My husband and I can chain up our pickup in 10 minutes, working together.

Lay the chains out in front of each tire you'll be chaining up; in moderate uses, we often chain up only the fronts. This gives better control on turns and pulls uphill well. In greasy mud or ice, we usually chain up the rears, and in really slick mud or deep snow we go for chaining up all four.

It's easiest to place the hook ends of the chains next to the tires. Then when you drive ahead, the loop end of the chain is pulled up over the tire. Be sure to have the chains laid out wide and straight, so that the tire is



*On our homestead, a 4X4 must work for a living. My husband, Bob, our son, David, and a friend, Nahshun, bring home a big elk cow.*

centered on the chain when you move forward 18 inches or so.

Shut off the truck and be sure it can't roll. Reach under the truck and hook the inside first. Boosting the chain a bit to the inside and over the top will help hook it short enough. Then boost it back, hoisting it up from the front of the tire to the top to gain enough slack to hook the outside hook as tight as possible. Get both sides hooked very tightly.

Fasten all hooks, including the bungee hooks, *away from the tire*. We've seen some hooks puncture tires when fastened facing the tire.

Most tire chains do not come with tightener plates. So we must resort to bungees to take out the remaining slack in the tire chains. Use fairly short bungees and make an X across the wheel. Two for each chain is adequate.

If need be, you can also chain up your truck after you're stuck. This is less than ideal, but can be done with patience. Shovel a clear spot out in front or behind the tire; whichever

will work. Then lay the chains very close to the tire. When the chains are in place, carefully and slowly, spin the chain under the tire, trying to stop on top of the chain. With luck and a little practice, you can then quickly chain up and rock out of your problem.

This can be dangerous, so be very careful, especially when you have a helper with you; thrown chains and sliding vehicles can easily kill. You can drive for short periods on paved roads, but they will quickly wear out chains if overused on pavement.

## Four-wheel driving tips

Driving a 4X4 is like ballroom dancing; you can't just go ramming around or you will spend a whole lot of time being embarrassed. With a four-wheel drive truck, you have a lot going for you: the four-wheel drive, high clearance, weight, and momentum.

Learning to use them all to the best advantage is what I call seat-of-the-pants experience. Sometimes a person knows what they should do in a given situation, but their body doesn't respond. The best example of this is learning to step on the gas when in certain out-of-control situations, instead of stepping on the brake, which is the old "normal" response.

Most folks drive too darned fast, especially on back roads, with their four-wheel drives. And they slide off the trail, break axles, pop tires, and wear out trucks like my 10-year-old son wears out jeans. We can't afford all that stress and expense. So we drive slowly, under control. "Stuff" happens; at 15 miles an hour on a mountain trail, you have more time to get out of trouble, before it gets serious, than at 45.

Instead of using speed to get through heavy going, try using momentum. Really watch the road ahead of you. If you're coming to a mud hole, snow drift, or steep hill, get rolling a ways *before* the problem,

then let the momentum provided by the truck's weight and gentle speed rock you through the spot. This beats the heck out of spinning and sliding because you were *in* trouble before you tried to speed up.

When tackling a slippery downhill trail, stop and shift into low-range granny and power down the hill. This gives much more control than braking downhill, which always results in sliding, a scary thing in most instances. Use low-range granny for those steep, rocky uphill climbs too; you'll break fewer parts and get there safer if you don't charge uphill like a racer. We can't afford to break parts on our truck. Leaping and bouncing over rocks is not our style.

One added benefit with a pickup is that in bad going you can throw extra weight in the back end. We stack half a ton of hay, firewood, or even shovel snow in if we need to get somewhere we really shouldn't. My husband Bob shoveled snow in the back when a neighbor ran out of firewood midwinter. They drove up the mountain, shoving snow with the headlights, till they reached a wood pile. After emptying the truck box of the snow, they filled it up with firewood and returned to the freezing neighbor's home. Extra weight adds to the power of the four-wheel drive and adds momentum to carry the truck through bad going.

Remember that having a four-wheel drive does not mean that you can zoom along without a worry. You can't stop any easier than with a two-wheel drive vehicle.

You'll learn, after driving a four-wheel drive on back trails for awhile, that a constant speed will not work as well as varying speed to fit road conditions and contours. On bad roads, one needs to be constantly "driving with your eyes," deciding where to put the tires, how much speed is necessary, how to best use momentum, judging clearance, etc.

And one of the most important lessons I've learned is to gently rock a stuck truck back and forth until I've gained enough momentum to help shove the truck out of a bad place. Spinning the tires is futile and only digs a grave.

We enjoy the challenge of four-wheel drive living and are always evolving in learning what we can do with one. In a past winter, when snowed in by a mile of drifted snow, we planked out on top of the six feet of snow. That is, we drove our chained-up truck on top of four 16-foot roughsawn 2x10 planks the entire mile. We slipped off once in awhile and spent a day or two digging down to dirt, then planked up out of the hole. But in two weeks we had planked out the whole mile. We laugh today because we *didn't* have to get out, but just wanted to try it, and it worked. Our Chevy snowshoes. Δ

# Caribbean Cooking

*By Richard Blunt*

Throughout history human migrations have resulted in interactions between different cultures that have resulted in exchanges of ideas. In the past, these migrations and the ensuing cultural exchanges took generations, if not centuries, to achieve. But in the last 200 years with the invention of steam and diesel-powered ships, as well as with trains, airplanes, and even automobiles, global travel has become both simple and commonplace. As little as a century ago it was considered a miracle that people could migrate across the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans in one week. But today, anyone can move from one culture to another in just a few hours simply by boarding one of the thousands of commercial airliners flying the skies every-day.

What has been the result of all this interaction? Human migrations have led to a blending of different and unique cultures and these cultures make strong and lasting contributions to each other. This process continues even today. The result is changes in the way we dress and the way we think. But the most recognizable contributions are how new cultural influences affect the way we eat, both the types of food we consume and the ways we prepare foods we're already familiar with.

For example, five hundred years ago Europeans brought to the New World wheat, beef, onions, garlic, and a host of other food items. In a desperate attempt to preserve at least a part of their culture, African slaves brought foods that were familiar to them including okra, callaloo (a spinach-like vegetable) and ackee (a fruit that looks like a peach with a pulp that has the texture and color of scrambled eggs). And Asians brought their own unique vegetables and, more importantly, they brought rice. But the flow wasn't just from the Old World to the New. Native foods, never seen in Europe, Asia, or Africa before 1492, including beans, corn, squash, potatoes, tomatoes, and, especially, the chili pepper came out of the Americas and spread throughout the Old World where they are now part of everyone's everyday diet.

This exchange between the Old and New World has changed forever the way the people all over this planet eat. But nowhere in the world is this intricate mixing of cuisines more noticeable than in the West Indies—what we today call the Caribbean Islands.



*Richard Blunt*

More than five centuries have passed since history's most notable explorer-for-hire, Christopher Columbus, "discovered" the New World, which is made up mostly of North and South America but also includes the 2600-mile chain of islands that stretches from Florida to Venezuela. It was in these islands that Columbus first landed. Writing about them he said, "Always the beauty is the same, and the fields very green and full of an infinity of fruits as red as scarlet, and everywhere there is the perfume of flowers and the singing of birds."

The soft, caressing, never cold, clear, and buoyant water, complemented by miles of soft-sanded beaches, along with beautiful interiors that range from arid and prickled with cactus to fertile with tumbling vegetation convinced him he had found the Garden of Eden. The islands bask in a tropic sun, the heat of which is moderated by the trade winds that blow from both the boisterous Atlantic and the gentler Caribbean Oceans and bring seasonal, torrential rains. Columbus' admiration has been repeated ever since by nearly every traveler fortunate enough to visit this paradise.

There are about 7000 Caribbean islands, although many of them are little more than rocks poking out of the ocean. Cuba is the largest. Hispaniola, the island that comprises Haiti and the Dominican Republic, is second in size. They are followed by Jamaica and Puerto Rico. If one could gather all of these islands together into a single landmass,

it would fit comfortably within a state the size of Wyoming.

Geologists believe that during the last ice age these islands formed a land bridge that spanned the distance between Florida and Venezuela. But melting glaciers at the end of that ice age raised sea levels and, coupled with repeated earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanic eruptions, three torments that still plague the region, this unbroken isthmus was submerged leaving only the tops of some of the mountains above the water. But enough of the region's natural splendor survived to convince Columbus that he had found paradise.

However, soon after his chance discovery, these islands became pawns of the world's great powers and the struggles that ensued were to last more than five centuries. During this period the islands were divided between those powers which included the United States, England, France, Spain, Holland, and Denmark. Many of the larger habitable islands like Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Trinidad, St. Thomas, St. Martin, Antigua, Guadeloupe, and Martinique were soon colonized by a mixture of people from Western Europe who were later joined by Lebanese, Syrians, Arabs, African slaves, and indentured servants from East India and China. One dramatic and inevitable result of this mixing is the dynamic cuisine that is common today to all of the islands whatever their colonial past.

In the real world of Caribbean life these island peoples have more in common with each other than they do with the nations that once ruled them. As a result, a Jamaican (from Jamaica, once a British possession) bears closer resemblance to a Martinican (from Martinique) than he does to an Englishman, and a Curacaoan (from Curacao, once a Dutch possession) more closely resembles a Puerto Rican than he does a Dutchman.

But, just as these island people bear little resemblance to their former European overlords, so too is their food different. But how shall we describe it? Modestly put, it is a varied collection of dishes made up with spicy mixtures of island flavors, frequently blended with tomatoes, chili peppers, and always

including a healthy dollop of imagination. I would be hard pressed to place Caribbean cuisine alongside the great European cuisines, or to claim that it is as well developed as the long established cuisines of the Orient. But it is, without a doubt, a classic cuisine still in the making. It is enticing, exotic, and, above all, experimental and open to interpretation. It is based on imported and native treasures grown in the region's tropical soil, further enhanced by the fruits of a vibrant tropical sea which includes spiny lobster, conch, and shrimp. But, despite all the influence brought to it by five centuries of migration, Caribbean cooking has underlying elements which give it a truly unique and indigenous character.

## The Ameri-Indians

The first Caribbean civilizations were established by Ameri-Indians from what are present-day Venezuela and the Guianas. These were the Carib and Arawak Indians. The Arawaks, a gentle and placid people, were cruelly exploited by the European newcomers and nearly exterminated within a few generations. The Caribs, on the other hand, were more belligerent and seasoned warriors. They took on the Spanish, French, and English and fought longer than any other Indian tribe including the Apaches of the American Southwest, before eventually being reduced to a small number of scattered groups. Unfortunately, much of the original Ameri-Indian cuisine these people





ate, with the exception of a few dishes prepared with indigenous fruits and vegetables, has not survived to modern times.

Ironically, it was knowledge of the local fruits and vegetables gained from the Indians that sustained the early European settlers for the first several years. Even though this first influence, at first glance, seems to have been a primitive one, it had some lasting effects. Many of these Indians were farmers of sorts and raised starchy roots like cassava from which they made bread. They also cultivated sweet potatoes and arrowroot, which produces a nutritive starch that is one of the easiest for humans to digest.

There is also one cooking legacy for which every backyard chef in America owes these early settlers a profound salute. The word barbecue comes from a grate made of thin green sticks, called a barbacoa, upon which the Arawaks grilled meat over an open fire. On the barbacoa thin strips of meat were cooked slowly, exposing them to the smoke from the fire below. Slow cooking allowed the meat to be constantly enhanced with its own fat. The whole process gave the meat a flavor that few are unfamiliar with today.

Some writers have suggested other origins for this word, but, in my opinion, none of them are as convincing or make as much sense. It has also been documented that the more savage Caribs developed a taste for the limbs of their enemies.

It is my opinion that most of the Caribs were able to escape the area and travel to Papua New Guinea, where they changed their names and waited for the unsuspecting Europeans to discover the region in 1930. For all we know they may be still barbecuing their enemies. (That's a joke, folks.)

## Europeans arrive

Following Columbus to the islands was a flood of people from all over Europe including parts of Scandinavia. They brought with them their familiar cuisines along with new fruits, vegetables, and meats. Many of these food items, along with recipe concepts previously unknown in the Caribbean, found a permanent home and many foods that are now considered synonymous with the Caribbean, such as breadfruit, limes, mangoes, rice, sugar cane, and coffee were, in fact, introduced to the islands by the Europeans.

The fortune-seeking Europeans soon started importing slaves from Africa to tend cash-producing crops like sugar cane. These slaves brought with them other crops new to the Caribbean islands, such as okra, callaloo, and ackee. Slaves incorporated these and other foods into a style of cooking that became basic throughout the Caribbean and it still exists today.

## Enter China and India

Early in the 1800s Europe began rocking with agitation against the slave system. By 1850 both England and France took a position to end slavery in all of their colonies. Of course, emancipation in the Caribbean did little to improve the working conditions of the former slaves, even though they were now being paid for their labors. As a result, most of the ex-slaves opted to leave the fields and other previously forced labor positions.

This mass exodus caused many problems, especially on islands like Trinidad where large-scale sugar cane production had been started at about the same time that slavery ended. The desperate need for a new labor force was solved when plantation owners opted to import large numbers of indentured servants from China and India. Indenture is just a step removed from slavery, and these folks fared little better than the Africans. But the influence of both of these cultures on Caribbean cuisine was dramatic and has been long lasting. With very few exceptions, dishes enhanced with a versatile spice mixture that East Indians call kari podi (KAH-ree Podee) and the English call curry has become as much a Caribbean dish as it is Indian.

Oriental influence can be seen throughout the island chain where there is a great love of rice highlighted by a concern for cooking it properly. There is also a noticeable presence of Chinese vegetables in many of the islands' markets. From Cuba to Trinidad the blended influence of South American Aboriginal, European, African, East Indian, and Chinese cuisines can be seen. Along with the multi-cultural and indigenous influences, many of the islands have developed unique interpretations of the same dish. For instance, Jamaicans use coconut oil when preparing many of these dishes while on Haiti dairy butter and olive oil is preferred. Also, some dishes are hailed on certain islands and scorned on others.

## Tourism and independence

During the past few decades a fifth and perhaps the most significant wave of influence is having a profound and positive effect on Caribbean cuisine. It was brought about by tourism.

For many years following its discovery it was difficult, at best, and most often impossible to get a meal formulated with indigenous ingredients, and prepared using local recipes. This is because, from the very beginning, European colonists look on the local foods with scorn and distrust, and took great efforts to import familiar foods from their homelands. When the modern age of Caribbean tourism began in the 20th century, hotel and inn operators took the same attitude. Along with other negatives, they felt that the type of tourist who came to the Caribbean was

more obsessed with sun and sand than with food. To a great extent they were correct. Most pre-war travelers to the area were older retirees with lots of money and leisure time. When they wanted adventure and glamorous food they went to Europe. When they wanted rest and recuperation they went to the Caribbean. All of this changed after World War II. More airstrips were built on many islands while planes themselves got bigger and airfares became cheaper. As a result vacationers were getting younger, less affluent, and more adventurous. They were anxious to experience a way of life different from what they knew at home. Tourists began asking hotel operators why they served imported fruits instead of local fruits like mango or papaya, and filet of sole instead of spiny lobster or red snapper.

At the same time the urge to be independent was growing throughout the region. The islanders wanted to take control of their lands and their own destinies. They were becoming more conscious of their own unique heritage and were coming to recognize how un-European it was. Today the results of these combined changes are evident through the Caribbean. Local foods have proven to be a great friend maker, a bridge closing the gap between mainlanders and islanders. Most of the islands take great pains to introduce tourists to their outstanding features, which includes unique handicrafts and exciting food made with local fruits, vegetables, and meats. These efforts have been very successful on Jamaica where the government sponsors an annual Culinary Arts competition. The purpose of this competition is to encourage the preparation of Jamaican foods with new and exciting recipes. This competition has been a successful event that has drawn thousands of contestants from all walks of life since its inception in 1962.

The excitement over Caribbean food is not confined to the islands. Jamaican meat patties and coco bread have become a favorite food even in staid old Connecticut where I live. One of the major supermarkets chains, which has stores in western Massachusetts and Connecticut, has a contract with a well known and respected Jamaican bakery in Hartford to supply beef and chicken patties to several of their large high volume stores. As a result a surprising number of folks have fallen in love with these tasty patties that originated in Haiti and were brought to their current popularity by talented Jamaican cooks.

## Rum

Oh yes, before we move to the recipe section I must say a few words about the elixir of the West Indies—Rum. Every major island in the Caribbean has its own varieties of rum, and each has its own favored rum drinks. Rum, also known as kill devil and rumbullion, has had a hot and hellish history. Rum is distilled directly from sugar cane or molasses. (Molasses is a by-product of the manufacture of

granulated sugar from raw cane.) The first distilled rum-like liquor is believed to have been produced on the island of Barbados around 1630. It was a very rough beverage with a very high alcohol content. The drink was given its name by shortening of the 17th century English word, rumbullion, which translates as tumult or rumpus. The association of rum and pirates is part fable but mostly true. Pirates preferred brandy whenever they could get it, but would not hesitate to settle for the more available rum. In fact the famous skull and crossbones flag was often replaced with another more ominous looking flag showing a skeleton with a dagger in one hand and a glass called a rummer in the other.

The lucrative New England slave trade imported molasses from the Caribbean, manufactured its own rotgut rum, shipped it to the west coast of Africa, and exchanged it for slaves, which were then sold to plantation owners on various Caribbean islands. At first, rum was not a favored drink, even on the islands where it was made. It started to gain popularity with the English navy when it was discovered that, unlike ale, it did not spoil on long sea voyages. In fact, they discovered that, like most distilled spirits, rum improved with storage. But soon the English navy realized that hard liquor was not the ideal drink for sailors on duty. The daily rum rations were responsible for a great deal of sickness and severe discipline problems. So, in 1731 Admiral Edward Vernon, the commander-in-chief of British navel forces in the Caribbean (a man who so impressed George Washington that he named his home after him) ordered all rum rations to be diluted with water. The Admiral was nicknamed Old Grog by his sailors because he often came aboard ships wearing a cape made of grogram, a loosely woven material of silk and wool. For many years thereafter the word grog was used to describe almost any distilled liquor that was cut with water. And today, we still use the adjective “groggy” to describe the aftereffects of drinking too much.

Rum is the only popular liquor distilled from the cane plant. Rum production starts with the manufacture of sugar. The cane stalks are first crushed to extract its sweet juice, which is then boiled. During this cooking process the sugar in the juice crystallizes and separates. What is left is a thick brown semi-liquid called molasses. The molasses is then fermented by adding a special strain of yeast. It is then distilled and the resultant colorless liquid is further processed to create the many varieties of rum.

Light rum is simply aged in plain oak casks or in stainless steel tanks. Darker rums are aged in charred oak casks, and sometimes sugar caramel is added. Rums are aged from just a few weeks up to 25 years, and frequently rums of various ages are blended. Caribbean rum, like Mexican tequila, is not, in my opinion, fully appreciated in this country. Both of these liquors offer a wide variety of quality for the savvy buyer. And there are countless drinks that

can be made to please even the casual drinker with a low tolerance for alcohol, like myself. I will have much more to share with you about these two liquors in a future column.

Getting back to the food, this issue's column is by no means an all-inclusive treatise on Caribbean cuisine. I would require several hundred pages to achieve that end, and even then there would be much left unsaid. What I am offering here is an appetizer that I hope will interest you in the vibrant and colorful culinary style where soups and stews are scented with fresh scallions, parsley, coriander leaves, and thyme. It is a cuisine in which many new and wonderful recipes are being created every day.

The recipes are a part of a collection I have had stored in an archive for many years. They were given to me by various friends, neighbors, family, and work associates over the decades. Of course, I have added my own little twist to all of them in an attempt to satisfy my own tastes and the tastes of my family. Once again I invite you to give these formulas a try, then make any adjustments that will suit your own tastes. It will not be necessary to go hunting for exotic tropical fruits, vegetables, and spices to work with these recipes. I avoided recipes that required ingredients that I could not buy at my local supermarket, while still feeling confident that I have included dishes that truly have a Caribbean flare.

## A Jamaican style curry seasoning

This spice mixture is the favorite food enhancer of an old fishing buddy of mine, Howard. He is a master at preparing exotic foods for a crowd of hungry surf fishermen over a wild open fire, at any hour of the day or night, on a windy and cold beach. Although I am convinced that most of his culinary mastery will go to the grave with him, I have, during his infrequent sharing moments, been able to acquire some of his recipes. This spice mixture is the platform from which many of Howard's Jamaican foods have sprung.

Howard has two passions: fishing and cooking. A few years ago he decided to go to Jamaica and fish in the annual fall marlin tournament held in Port Antonio. He returned home to Cape Cod and brought with him a notebook full of recipes and observations on Jamaican cooking. He has returned to Jamaica every fall since then, and always returns with a notebook full of recipes and notes. Four of the six recipes in this section use this seasoning to complement and enhance the other ingredients. In each recipe this seasoning adds a noticeably different flavor. It seems to me that the certain ingredients in each of these recipes brings forward the taste of some particular spice in the seasoning while mellowing others. Every time I use this seasoning in a new recipe it reveals another of its hidden flavors.

### Ingredients:

½ tsp. ground cumin
½ tsp. ground allspice
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
4 tsp. ground ginger
5 tsp. ground turmeric
4 tsp. ground coriander
½ tsp. mustard powder (use brown mustard seed if possible)
2 tsp. ground white pepper
2 tsp. ground black pepper
1 tsp. ground fenugreek

### Method:

1. To get the most flavor and character from this seasoning use whole spices if possible. They are inexpensive and can be found in any specialty food store, and in some supermarkets at a higher price. Ginger is the one exception. It is best to use commercial ground ginger.

2. If using whole spices, roast each spice separately in a heavy-bottom fry pan, and set them aside to cool.

3. Grind the spices to a medium fine powder in a spice mill, mortar and pestle, or coffee grinder that you use only for grinding spices. Don't use your regular coffee grinder because the oils in most of these spices will not wash out after being ground—unless you don't mind having cumin and coriander overtones in your morning coffee.

4. Store this spice mixture in an airtight container, in the refrigerator.

## Howard's West Indies beef patties

The idea for these patties originated in Haiti, but Jamaica takes credit for making them popular around the world. I named this recipe as I have because Howard, in one of his many creative moments, decided to rework a well-known Jamaican bread recipe, called coco bread, so it could be used in place of the standard pastry crust that is usually used with these patties. He reasoned that a pastry crust was too flaky and delicate to withstand the constant bouncing when he transported them to the beach in his jeep to feed the troops. Coco bread is also tasty as a pastry, but it is more resilient and will do well when reheated over an open fire. I prepare these patties, bake them, then freeze them individually in small freezer bags. They make a great snack or a replacement for a sandwich at lunchtime.

**Note:** I have included a ¼ tsp. of a bottled Jamaican seasoning sauce to the filling recipe. If you are lucky enough to live in an area that has a Jamaican or other West Indian population, this sauce can be purchased at any local grocery store. However, I have discovered that an equal amount of Worcestershire sauce is a workable substitute.

Do not confuse this Pickapeppa Sauce with Pickapeppa Pepper Sauce. The bottles look similar but the pepper sauce is hellfire in a bottle and has a very distinctive flavor of the Scotch bonnet pepper which may be hard on your palate if used in the quantity I recommend in the recipe.

**Ingredients for the meat patty filling:**

12 ounces lean ground beef (15 percent fat)  
1 medium onion, diced fine  
4 whole scallions, diced fine  
2 jalapeno peppers, diced fine  
1 garlic clove, minced  
1 tsp. fresh ginger, minced  
3 Tbsp. vegetable oil  
¾ cup unseasoned bread crumbs  
½ tsp. dried thyme leaves  
1½ tsp. Jamaican-style curry seasoning  
½ cup canned vegetable stock  
2 Tbsp. dark Jamaican Rum (Myers is good)  
¼ tsp. Jamaican Pickapeppa sauce or Worcestershire sauce  
1 tsp. fresh ground white pepper

**Method:**

1. Mix the onion, scallions, jalapeno peppers, garlic clove, and fresh ginger with the ground beef.
2. Heat the oil in a heavy-bottom pan over medium heat. Sauté the meat mixture, stirring frequently, until the meat loses its redness and starts to brown.
3. Combine the remaining ingredients in a bowl. Add them to the beef mixture, cover the skillet, reduce the heat to low and cook the mixture for about 15 minutes.
4. Stir the beef mixture occasionally. If it seems too dry add a little more vegetable stock.
5. Place the filling in the refrigerator, uncovered, to cool.

**Coco bread** is usually formed into a roll and served with soups and stews but Howard, in his culinary wisdom, decided to use it in a very nontraditional role. By combining this wonderful bread with the spicy meat patty filling, he has developed a gastronomical wonder that may even surprise some Jamaicans.

**Ingredients for Howard's coco bread:**

3 cups all purpose flour  
2 pkg. dry yeast  
1 tsp. dark brown sugar  
1 tsp. kosher salt  
2 tsp. Jamaican style curry seasoning  
1 dash cayenne pepper (optional)  
½ cup coconut milk  
½ cup water  
1 large egg at room temperature, lightly beaten

**Method:**

1. Combine the flour, yeast, brown sugar, salt, curry seasoning, and cayenne pepper and stir to distribute ingredients evenly.
2. Combine the coconut milk and water in a heavy bottom saucepan. Heat this mixture about 115 degrees. (Anywhere between 110 and 120 degrees is fine.)
3. Transfer the heated mixture to a suitable size bowl and stir in the egg.
4. Stir the coconut milk mixture into the flour mixture with a sturdy wooden spoon. Continue to mix until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl and forms a soft, slightly sticky ball.
5. Transfer the dough to a well floured board or counter top and kneed the dough for about 6 minutes or until the dough becomes smooth and will spring back to its original shape when poked with your finger. Place the dough in lightly oiled bowl, cover with a clean cloth and set it aside to rise until doubled in bulk. This will take about 30 to 45 minutes.
6. When the dough has properly risen, remove it from the bowl, punch it down to remove most of the air, and kneed it for about 3 minutes.
7. Divide the dough into 10 equal portions. Let the dough rest for 5 minutes. While the dough is resting remove the filling from the refrigerator.

**Assembling and baking the patties:**

1. Roll each portion of dough into a 4 to 5-inch circle on a lightly floured board or counter top and set them aside without stacking them.
2. Scoop an equal portion of filling onto each circle. Distribute it as evenly as you can to within about a half inch of the edge of each circle. Lightly moisten the edge of each circle with water and fold the dough in half. Seal the edges by gently pressing them with a fork.
3. Place the patties on two lightly oiled baking sheets, cover them with a clean cloth, and set them aside.
4. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees, uncover the patties, place them in the oven and bake them until they are golden brown. (About 20 minutes)

The following three recipes are the creations of three of the most talented and innovative women that I have ever known. I met these women while working at one of Hartford, Connecticut's major hospitals. Both of them lived near the hospital in a neighborhood that contained a majority of people that emigrated from Jamaica, Haiti, and Trinidad. Hard working and industrious people like these women were the backbone of the largest and most successful food production staff I have ever managed. Hospital kitchens are busy places and the work is demanding and often repetitious. In a daily effort to make life at work more interesting these three women would constantly talk about the foods that they prepared for their families. Of

course, not all of their menus were exotic tropical wonders. They would swap their latest meat loaf, and “mac and cheese” recipes with as much enthusiasm as they would foods from their homelands. During the six years that I worked with them I learned most of what I know about Caribbean food. Both of the following curry recipes are variations on a very broad theme. Every time they were the subject of conversation, one or two of the ingredients would change along with the preparation method.

I spent the better part of two days trying to decide which of the twelve curried lamb, seven curried chicken, and nine rice and peas recipes that I would include in this issue. (In the “rice and peas” recipe, “peas” refers to what *we* think of as beans, i.e., kidney beans, red beans, etc., not green peas.) Even though I have titled two of these recipes as though they represent foods originating from Jamaica and Trinidad, I admit that I am not sure of this. I am sure, however, that the person who gave me the recipes came from one of those islands.

Almost every island in the Caribbean has as many recipes for rice and peas as there are cooks for this universal dish. To be certified as a true Caribbean rice and pea recipe the formula needs only three ingredients: rice, some type of dried bean, and a potable liquid for a cooking medium. Once these requirements are met the talent, creativity, and imagination of the cook rules. I have been playing with this recipe for eight years and I have yet to exhaust its potential.

Note I have suggested using canned coconut milk in all of the recipes. I feel that, like canned tomatoes, canned coconut milk is a quality product that can be used in most recipes without ill effect. I have gone through the labor-intensive process of extracting coconut milk from the pulp of fresh coconuts and used it in all of these recipes. When I substituted canned or rehydrated powdered coconut milk, even the very discriminating pallets of my recipe review committee were not able to detect any difference. To convince myself that all members of the committee, which now includes my wife Tricia, I omitted the coconut milk on one occasion. I was forced to eat most of the lamb curry and all of the rice myself. After the failed meal was over, my daughter Sarah’s only comment was, “Are you feeling okay today, Dad?” Having said that, she patted me on the shoulder and walked away.

## Jamaican curried lamb

### Ingredients:

3 lbs. lean lamb, diced in 1-inch cubes  
6 Tbsp. peanut oil (use additional oil if needed)  
2 Tbsp. peanut oil  
3 cups onions, diced medium

1 large red sweet bell pepper, diced medium  
3 Tbsp. Jamaican-style curry seasoning  
½ tsp. fresh ground allspice  
2 jalapeno peppers, diced fine  
2 tsp. kosher salt  
1 tsp. fresh ground black pepper  
1 cup canned coconut milk  
1 cup fresh chicken stock or low salt canned chicken stock  
1 bay leaf  
2 Tbsp. lime juice  
¼ tsp. Angostura bitters  
2 Tbsp. dark rum

### Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.
  2. Pat the diced lamb cubes dry with paper towels. (The reason for drying the meat first is that wet red meat will not brown properly.) In a heavy-bottom skillet heat two tablespoons of oil over medium-high heat. Place six or seven of the lamb cubes into the hot oil and brown them on all sides. When browned remove the lamb and set it aside in a suitable size bowl. Repeat this process until all of the lamb is browned.
  3. In the same heavy bottom skillet heat the other two tablespoons of oil, add the onions and red pepper, then sauté them over medium heat until the onions become soft and translucent but not browned. Add the curry seasoning, allspice, and chili peppers and continue to sauté for one minute.
  4. Add the salt, black pepper, coconut milk, chicken stock, bay leaf, and browned lamb to the vegetable mixture in a suitable size oven casserole. Loosely cover the casserole and place it in the oven for about one hour or until the lamb is tender.
  - 5 Remove the cover from the casserole, and gently stir in the remaining ingredients. Return the casserole to the oven, uncovered, for an additional 15 minutes.
- Serve this casserole with your favorite rice dish. As a side dish, a nice mango chutney is a perfect complement to this curry.

## Chicken curry a la Trinidad

### Ingredients:

2½ lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breasts (cut into about ¾-inch pieces)  
¼ cup flour  
½ tsp. McCormick Spicy Montreal Steak seasoning  
6 Tbsp. peanut oil to brown the chicken  
2 Tbsp. peanut oil  
2 medium size yellow onions, diced medium



4 plump fresh garlic cloves, minced  
1 Tbsp. fresh ginger root, minced  
6 tsp. curry seasoning  
2 14-ounce cans of diced tomatoes  
1¼ cup fresh or canned chicken stock  
kosher salt to taste  
fresh ground black pepper to taste  
2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice

**Method:**

1. Combine the flour and the steak seasoning in a brown paper bag. Add the chicken and shake the bag to coat the chicken evenly.

2. Heat six tablespoons of the oil in a heavy-bottom fry pan. Place six or seven of the chicken cubes into the hot oil and brown them on all sides. When browned, remove the chicken and set it aside in a suitable size bowl. Repeat this process until all of the chicken is browned.

3. Discard any remaining oil and add two tablespoons of fresh oil to the pan over medium heat. When the oil is hot add the onion and sauté until the onion is translucent. Add the garlic, ginger root, and curry seasoning and continue cooking for one minute while stirring with a wooden spoon.

4. Add the tomatoes, chicken stock, salt, pepper, and lime juice. Bring the mixture to a slow simmer and hold it there for 5 minutes.

5. Place the chicken in a suitable size oven casserole, and add the sauce. Cover the casserole and put it in the oven to cook for 45 minutes or until the chicken is tender without being dry.

## Rice and peas

As I said, the word peas here actually means beans. When served with a hearty vegetable salad, this rice dish is a complete meal. Be aware, however, there is no suitable substitute for basmati rice in the recipe.

**Ingredients:**

½ cup dried kidney beans  
water to wash and soak the beans  
1½ cups basmati rice  
water to wash and soak the rice  
2 cups canned coconut milk  
2 Tbsp. peanut oil  
½ cup onion, diced fine  
1 garlic clove, chopped fine  
2 whole scallions, diced medium  
¼ tsp. dried leaf thyme  
1¼ cups canned vegetable stock  
¼ tsp. kosher salt  
½ Tbsp. granulated sugar

1 Tbsp. dark Jamaican rum  
2 Tbsp. fresh coriander leaves—also called cilantro, chopped (note: fresh mint is a nice substitute for coriander leaves if you can't find them)

**Method:**

1. Put the beans in a heavy-bottom saucepot with about 1 quart of water. Boil the beans for 2 minutes then set aside for one hour to soak.

2. Add 2 quarts of cold water to the rice and gently rub the rice between your fingers to remove the excess starch. Repeat this process with fresh water until the water remains clear. Soak the rice in 1 quart of cold water for at least 30 minutes.

3. Drain and rinse the beans with fresh cold water. Combine the beans with the coconut milk and cook the beans in the coconut milk over medium heat until they are tender but not mushy.

4. Drain the rice and set it aside.

5. Heat the oil in a 2-quart heavy-bottom saucepot over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until the onion becomes translucent. Add the rice and continue to sauté the mixture for two minutes, while stirring gently with a wooden spoon.

6. Add the garlic and scallion and continue sautéing the mixture for one minute.

7. Add the thyme, vegetable stock, salt, granulated sugar, rum, and beans along with the coconut milk.

8. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium high heat, reduce the heat to low and stir gently with a wooden spoon to prevent the rice from sticking to the bottom of the pot.

9. Place a lid loosely on the pot and cook the rice mixture for 15 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat, place the lid tightly on the pot and allow the rice to rest, undisturbed, for another 15 minutes.

10. Transfer the rice and beans to a serving platter and sprinkle chopped coriander on top. Serve immediately.

Note: This rice can be served right away or transferred to an oven casserole, refrigerated and reheated at another time in a 300-degree oven. The special attention given to the basmati rice in this recipe transforms this very delicate food, which usually doesn't hold up very well when chilled and reheated, to one that reheats without breaking up.

Well, I hope this brief tour of Caribbean cuisine will give you an idea of some of the gastronomical treasures that can be found in this tropical paradise. Perhaps in the future we will go back to this area and sample some of these foods. We can prepare some **chicharrones de pollo** (marinated fried chicken) from the Dominican Republic, **brazo gitano** (baked cassava roll with corned beef filling) from Cuba, **salt fish and ackee** from Jamaica, and **surullitos** (cheese corn sticks) from Puerto Rico. Δ

# Ask Jackie

Dealing with wild bears and moose, moving to the country, canning cabbage, “cracking earth,” old butter churns, water pressure, generating power in the backwoods, and more

*I've spent most of my life in city living, but long ago purchased land in the woods to retire in. Am in the process of readying land to place a double wide trailer on for year-round permanent living. The land is located on a town-maintained dirt road, about two miles into the woods. They've finally brought power and telephone into our road and property, but for all the amenities, we still have abundant wildlife traveling through our property. Now, I'm not too concerned with the deer and the moose, but have no knowledge of what I need to know to live among the bears. Being from the city, I've only seen them caged in zoos. I will be a woman living with two small children for a year, until hubby can retire and join us in his native state.*

*Meanwhile, although he's comfortable about living there, he won't be there for awhile, except on visits. Being alone with the kids, I need to learn quickly all that I must know so that I can protect my children. What can you tell me about living in an area where visits from bears could be a reality. Just an additional note: my bedroom is to be a full sunroom, and will that be a problem where bears are concerned? I appreciate any advice and suggestions you can give me.*

**PT from the city**  
**Ptweedie4750@cs.com**

I think I can lay your fears of bears to rest, at least somewhat. They really aren't the evil, bloodthirsty creatures movies and TV portrays. I've lived in bear country for much of my life, raising a large family, and have never had a bad encounter with a bear, either grizzly or black.

Bears are basically very shy critters, and would rather avoid people than attack them. The only exceptions are when bears learn that people often leave food lying around—easy pickings in a harsh, natural world, or when a sow bear defends her cubs from human “attack,” either real or imagined.

You really don't want to feed bears, even unintentionally. The saying “A fed bear is a dead bear,” means that when bears learn to forage through people's yards for food they become used to human scent and presence, soon disregarding people or becoming aggressive. A problem bear is created, then usually shot.

So keep a clean yard. No garbage cans or bags, no dog or cat food left outside at night. Even chicken feed and garden refuse will attract bears at times. Where bears are “thick,” with tracks or scat sighted regularly, don't even leave hummingbird feeders out at night or you might end up attracting a very large “hummingbird.” I've seen bears in yards, sitting down with a hummingbird feeder clasped firmly



**Jackie Clay**

in both paws, calmly tipping it up, downing the sugar water.

In 30 years of living in the wilds, I've only had one bear come in the yard. He caused no trouble other than upsetting our dogs.

Bears very seldom break into a house or trailer. I've only heard of three when the home was occupied. And two of those happened when the place was vacant for over a week. In the other instance, no one was molested (and the trailer was pretty old and flimsy to start with—screen door only, with dog food and garbage just inside the door). I think you will be safe in your sunroom bedroom. Sounds good to me.

To make yourself more comfortable, talk to the Fish and Wildlife officer in your area. You might also buy and learn to fire a shotgun or rifle if it would make you feel safer. We've never killed a bear, only firing over its rump to advertise the fact that we were armed and did not appreciate a bear in our yard. I am not a “gun nut,” but do keep a .30.30 and a 12-gauge shotgun handy. I know I am accurate with either, and either gun would take care of any predator, be it cougar, bear, or two-legged.

*can we do to preserve our favorite-broccoli?*

**Greg and Carol Kumher**  
**kumhome@aptalaska.net**

My goodness, how the canning books have changed. I've seen so much good information replaced with "gourmet" recipes and the like. Yes you can home can cabbage. But it does tend to be a little strong tasting, i.e., pretty cabbagey. It isn't bad, and I usually dump the water it is canned in and heat the cabbage in fresh water. This removes much of the strong taste. In soups, stews, and other mixed dishes, you don't notice it a bit. Our favorite way to use canned cabbage is to drain it, then fry it in 2 tablespoons of butter. Then I add just enough milk to simmer it in and simmer gently for just long enough to nearly dry it up. Pretty darned good!

To can cabbage, I shred it, then boil it just until it wilts. Pack it in quart jars, and fill the jar to within a half inch of the rim with the liquid it was boiled in. Add a teaspoon of salt if you want. Wipe the rim, put on a pre-boiled warm lid, and screw a ring down firmly tight. Then place in your canner and process the quarts for 60 minutes at 10 pounds. (Adjust pounds of pressure, if needed, according to altitude).

Broccoli sucks when canned. It gets strong, mushy, and limp. But broccoli is one of our favorites, too. So instead of canning it, I dry it. Broccoli is very easy to dry and reconstitutes well, too. Simply cut your flowerets, then blanch for 1 minute. Then chop them up, fairly small (1 in., max) and lay out in a single layer on either a cookie sheet to be placed in a shaded hot place (attic, hay loft, stove oven, with only pilot on, etc.) or in a dehydrator. Even though we live off grid, I still use my dehydrator, timing my work with dehydrating foods, I can get a batch pretty well started in the dehydrator, then simply let it finish by

itself on the counter, still on the dehydrator trays.

Broccoli is "done" when it feels like wood: crunchy. I store it in miscellaneous glass jars. It keeps forever. Then when I want to add broccoli to a soup, casserole, or other dish, I simply pull out a handful and give it a scrunch and toss it in. It doesn't work too well as a side dish on its own. You must reconstitute it in boiling water for this. I do this the night before and, when the pan with the soaking broccoli is cool, I cover it and put it in the fridge over night, until needed, then I reheat it.

— Jackie

The deer will not be a problem to you, other than possibly snacking on your garden. The moose can be dangerous at times, however funny they look. During the fall rut, the bulls get quite aggressive, and will occasionally try to chase a human. In the spring and early summer, cow moose will be travelling with calves and do tend to guard them. Cows will attack humans to protect their calves.

Teach your children about bear and moose behavior and you will probably never have the slightest problem. We haven't, so far, and don't expect any in the future. We truly love living with bear, moose, and wolves. When our youngest son, David, was barely walking, he'd go outside early in the morning and "visit" with elk and moose who came into our meadow every day. They viewed him calmly from a few yards away and seemed to carry on a conversation with him, tails wagging. We try to live with our animal neighbors, rather than live in fear of them. You'll grow to love your wild land.

— Jackie

*We live off the grid and very soon will no longer have the availability of freezer space. We do a lot of canning, but what we are wondering about is broccoli and cabbage. Can these be canned? All my books say it is not a good idea. I know that cabbage can be canned as kraut, but we like plain old cabbage best. We've tried to root cellar it, but our conditions so far haven't produced a good keep. What*

*As a new subscriber to BHM, I read with interest your description of your homestead in Wolf Creek, MT. I realize you are looking for something even more off the grid, but it was especially timely for me as I am moving to Wolf Creek in a few years.*

*We have purchased 53 acres there and will be visiting the area in August to confirm the deal. We have yet not seen the acreage, but from your description, the area sounds beautiful.*

*I would very much like to get in contact with the closest Chamber of Commerce to get much-needed information on the area. I am also interested in contacting the County Extension Office, so I can familiarize myself with the growing season and what grows best. Do you know the closest C of C and Extension Office to Wolf Creek?*

**Donna Vega**  
**Wannabewriter01@aol.com**

Sure I do. That would be Helena. The Helena Chamber Visitor Center is 2003 Cedar, Helena, MT 59601. Phone (406) 447-1540 and the Extension Office is Lewis and Clark County Extension Service, 316 N Park Ave., Helena, MT 59601. Phone (406) 447-8346.

The Wolf Creek area is rugged and mountainous, with a narrow, flat val-

ley running along the Missouri river from just north of Wolf Creek. The Missouri turns north at this point and a tributary, Little Prickly Pear Creek, runs through Wolf Creek, forming a narrow, rocky canyon for about 7 miles.

I worry that you have not seen the land you are buying. This area is very rugged, and much of the private land is pretty darned up and down, with a lot of rock. We lucked out in this department, as our place sits on its own private valley, like the palm of your cupped hand. Others are not so fortunate. I'm hoping your land is like ours, mostly useable for homestead purposes.

Gardens do great here; everything from peas to pumpkins do very well. Right now I have tomatoes 4 feet high, just loaded with fruit. You do have to watch out for both late spring frosts and early fall frosts, but generally we have, at 4,000 feet, from the first of June to around the middle of October for a growing season. The area is semi-arid, and you will need a good water source. Good luck with your move. — **Jackie**

*My husband and I want to move to Florida. From what I understand there is still a lot of undeveloped property there but I'm sort of doubtful. Do you know anything about Florida land and small scale farming? Are there more desirable places there to find a small piece of land (2-5 acres) or is Florida sort of gone to the tourists? Thank you for anything you can tell us.*

**Karen Carter**  
**Kcarter451@aol.com**

I just can't recommend Florida. I'm sure there are a lot of homesteading folks there who might disagree with me, but there are just so many negatives about Florida that I can't in good conscience recommend it.

Yes, there's the tourist thing on one hand, then there's the retirees. They

have made the state quite crowded. But much worse is the drug problem in the cities, which is encroaching on rural areas. My great-aunt and cousins live(d) there and the remaining family is trying to get out of their old neighborhood, as it is plain dangerous to live there. We're not talking about big cities here, either.

Water is becoming a great problem in Florida, as well. There are just too many people living there, using the water. Wells are becoming undependable (some because of salinity and others because they're going dry). And the humidity bothers a lot of folks. (My mother lived there as a youngster.)

I'll probably get angry letters from Florida residents, but you asked my opinion, and I always tell it like it is to me. You might be exceedingly happy in Florida. Check out *Rural Property Bulletin* for small acreages if I haven't changed your mind. There are usually listings. — **Jackie**

*Love your column! I can always count on learning something new. My question is: How do I keep the ground from cracking apart? I live in the city and have a small garden and am able to do my own compost that I keep working in. Most of my compost is grass and leaves from my yard. Do I need more compost? I only use a rototiller at the start of the season to turn everything in.*

**Eric McIntosh**  
**emcintos@earthlink.net**

Having trouble with cracking earth, huh? You're right about needing more compost. But you probably need to water more, too. To conserve moisture, you can add a mulch of leaves and dry grass, starting out with four inches, then adding more as the vegetables grow. Don't use "hot" green grass for mulch, as it might cook tender plants.

Water in the evening and morning. Evaporation at those times will not

rob your garden of needed moisture. I water each section of my garden that is not on a drip hose for at least two hours every other day when it is hot. We are in a semi-arid climate. In a moister climate, you won't have to water as often. But that cracking soil is a good sign that you need more moisture for happy plants. — **Jackie**

*I was given the gift of a Dazey #8 butter churn. It sat in a barn, preserved by the dust. The jar is made of glass and the top gear cover and crank are made of maybe a tin-type metal. My husband estimates that the jar holds 2 gallons of milk. The butter paddle is made of wood that neither of us recognize. The lid is rusted slightly in places, the gears seem to turn fine. Is there anything I can do to make it "useable" again? We just*



*purchased a Jersey who supposedly is pregnant and hopefully I'll get to use my churn soon.*

**Brenda Culbreth**  
***jbaculbreth@earthlink.net***

Someone gave you a great gift, Brenda. Sounds like you'll be in the butter business pretty soon, and you'll really love fresh churned butter.

The paddle is probably maple, as that is what many of the churn dashers were made from. Maple is tough, dense, and strong, easy to clean, and not prone to cracking. To get it ready to use, simply steel-wool off any "crusty" rust, wash it well with hot soapy water, and air dry.

Most of the old churns, mine included, are a bit rusty. We all are after a few decades. But I'll wager your new churn is in pretty darned good shape. (Don't break the jar; a new jar will cost upwards on to \$60.)

— Jackie

*I am designing my independent home for a flat site but want water delivered under pressure provided by gravity. I am trying to determine a water pressure (PSI) needed to be unfrustrating and use energy efficient fixtures, washing machine, and water purifying filters; then I can determine the height of the water tower. I know the rule of 2.31 ft of head equals 1 psi, and I know what standard fixtures and appliances require. What I hope you can tell me is what PSI is acceptable to a soft-living household, for an adequate flow through items like: sink faucet, water-saving shower head, low flush toilet, undersink water purifier, acid neutralizer, and energy & water-saving clothes washer. I suspect the filters in a water purifier require a lot of pressure, and maybe the clothes washer. We don't care how long the washing machine takes to fill, and perhaps there is a low-tech way to purify water by settling through a sand filter using only gravity.*

*Do you alert accepted inquirers that an answer will be answered?*

**Philip Anderson**  
**Monrovia, MD**

Whew! I'm not sure I'm smart enough to answer your question, but I'll give it a whack. In New Mexico, where we spent six years recently, helping out my folks, many families still use a windmill to draw their water, and rely on raised water tanks to provide gravity flow to their homes.

Most tanks' bottoms were about 10 feet above ground, the tanks holding about 600 gallons of water when full. The tanks are housed in an insulated building, which can also be heated, if necessary, in the winter. These tanks provide "city water" pressure to the homes—shower, automatic washing machines, filters, etc.

But a raised water tank is rather expensive to build. Have you considered using a 12-volt in-line pump from an on-grade inside storage tank? This pump can be harnessed to a solar system and battery bank. Several folks up in this neck of the woods are using such a setup.

You don't say where your water will be coming from—well, creek, or spring—so that might help make your decision for you.

We are very soft-living, especially after the infamous Montana drought last year, when we had to haul water. We have much experience in water conservation and low-pressure useage. I have an old wringer washer, which I fill with 10 gallons of water, and a galvanized tub that holds 10 gallons of rinse water. So with 20 gallons of water, I can wash 5 loads of clothes, starting with the cleanest whites and progressing to jeans. Then I toss in a rug or two in the last water. And my clothes come out clean.

We have a low flush toilet, but it is not such a good idea; you have to hold the handle down until the entire

"load" is entirely gone. Maybe others have had better luck?

We have a spring, and use no water purifier or acid neutralizer, but realize others must use them. We have used dump-in water purifiers for drinking water only, which worked very well with no pressure.

*BHM* tries to publish all questions directed to the *Ask Jackie* column, but we cannot let you know if and when we will be answering your questions.

— Jackie

*I am interested in finding out all I can about generating power for the home I one day plan to build (self-sufficient home...i.e. food, water, power, etc.). The problem is that with all my online searching, I have been unable to find practical, and useful info on generating power. For example using a mill wheel powered by water to run a generator or some thing similar to power a home.*

*I am also always looking for knowledge of items or processes that are lost arts, so to speak—tanning, making candles, getting back to basics and being as unfettered by modern living as possible. Kind of a modern pioneer.*

**Leslie Smith**  
**GANDIMERE2@aol.com**

Read Michael Hackleman's articles in previous issues of *BHM* to learn much about generating power with water.

I guess we're those modern pioneers you talk about. We simply don't have need for power. Now we don't live a "rustic" life of all hard work, living in a dark hovel. But we live our life, designing comforts for ourselves that do not require electricity, a simple fact few people can grasp. I have no microwave, no electric kitchen appliances. I cook on wood except during the hottest months, when I use the propane kitchen range. We have many large windows, and have also had skylights in previous homes to let

the *sun* in. We watch no television. We do have a basic radio/tape player, rechargeable battery-powered, solar charger. We *read* a lot, play board games, and work puzzles in the evening. (It really is fun).

Our water comes from a spring, gravity fed into the house. No electricity needed for water pressure. Therefore we have a flush toilet, hot baths, and “normal” water to the faucets.

We do have a gas generator, as my work as a writer helps pay the inevitable bills on today’s homestead. I try to schedule my writing for the evenings. As our house is wired for normal 110-volt electricity, we then have the lights on and our youngest son, 10-years-old, can watch a movie on the VCR while I work. (We could use a couple of solar panels on the roof and battery bank for storage, instead.)


Our fridge is propane, as are our lights, used mostly during the short-day winter months.

I’m sure we could upgrade to solar, but in our northern climate, with temperatures often below zero, water power is out of the question as a year-round option.

Keep reading *Backwoods Home* and you’ll learn many of those skills you mentioned as well as many, many more. You might even pick up a few anthologies of issues past to catch up quickly. Good luck. — Jackie

Read more of  
**Jackie Clay’s**  
great columns at the  
***Backwoods Home***  
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website:  
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## THE IRREVERENT JOKE PAGE

(Believing it is important for people to be able to laugh at themselves, this is a continuing feature in *Backwoods Home Magazine*. We invite readers to submit any jokes you'd like to share to *BHM*, P.O. Box 712, Gold Beach, OR 97444. There is no payment for jokes used.)

**T**he angry wife met her husband at the door. There was alcohol on his breath and lipstick on his collar. "I assume," she snarled, "that there is a very good reason for you to come waltzing in here at six o'clock in the morning?"

"There is," he replied. "Breakfast."

**S**tanding at the edge of a lake, a man saw a woman flailing about in the deep water. Unable to swim, the man screamed for help. A trout fisherman ran up. The man said, "My wife is drowning and I can't swim. Please save her. I'll give you a hundred dollars."

The fisherman dove into the water. In ten powerful strokes, he reached the woman, put his arm around her, and swam back to shore.

Depositing her at the feet of the man, the fisherman said, "Okay, where's my hundred?"

The man said, "Look, when I saw her going down for the third time, I thought it was my wife. But this is my mother-in-law."

The fisherman reached into his pocket and said, "Just my luck. How much do I owe you?"

**O**ne day, a man spotted a lamp by the roadside. He picked it up, rubbed it vigorously and a genie appeared. "I'll grant you your fondest wish," the genie said. The man thought for a moment, then said, "I want a spectacular job—a job that no man has ever succeeded at or has ever attempted to do."

"Done!" said the genie. "You're a housewife." (POOF).

**Y**oung Son: "Is it true, Dad? I heard that in some parts of Asia a man doesn't know his wife until he marries her?"

Dad: "That happens in most countries, son."

**D**o you know how many lawyer jokes there really are in the world? Only three. The rest are true stories.

**A** man had been drinking at a pub all night. The bartender finally said that the bar was closing. So the man stood up to leave and fell flat on his face. He tried to stand one more time; same result. He figured he'd crawl outside and get some fresh air and maybe that will sober him up.

Once outside he stood up and fell flat on his face. So he decided to crawl the four blocks to his home. When he arrived at the door he stood up and again fell flat on his face. He crawled through the door and into his bedroom. When he reached his bed he tried one more time to stand up. This time he managed to pull himself upright, but he quickly fell right into bed and was sound asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow.

He was awakened the next morning to his wife standing over him, shouting, "So, you've been out drinking again!!"

"What makes you say that?" he asked, putting on an innocent look.

"The pub called -- you left your wheelchair there again."

**A** beggar walked up to a well dressed woman shopping on Rodeo Drive and said, "I haven't eaten anything in four days."

She looked at him and said, "God, I wish I had your will power."

**A** guy comes walking into a bar with a little turtle in his hand. The turtle is a mess—it has one eye that's black and blue, two of his legs are bandaged, and his whole shell is taped together with duct tape. The guy notices a dog laying down on the other side of the bar.

The bartender asks the man, "My gosh! What's wrong with your turtle?"

"Absolutely nothing," the man responds. "In fact, this turtle is very fast. Take your dog and let him stand at the end of the bar. Then go and stand at the other end of the room and call your dog. I'll bet you \$500 that before your dog reaches you, my turtle will be there on your side."

So the bartender, thinking it's an easy \$500, agrees. The guy puts his turtle on the floor and the bartender goes to the other side of the bar. On the count of three, he calls his dog.

Suddenly, the guy picks up his turtle and throws it against the wall.

"Told you he'd be there before your dog. Pay up!"

Prosecutor: "Did you kill the victim?"  
Defendant: "No, I did not."  
Prosecutor: "Do you know what the penalties are for perjury?"  
Defendant: "Yes, I do. And they're a lot better than the penalty for murder."

A football coach walked into the locker room before a game, looked over to his star player and said, "I'm not supposed to let you play since you failed math, but we need you in there."  
So, what I have to do is ask you a math question, and if you get it right, you can play."  
The player agreed, and the coach looked into his eyes intently and asks, "Okay, now concentrate hard and tell me the answer to this. What is two plus two?"  
The player thought for a moment and then he answered, "4?"  
"Did you say 4?" the coach exclaimed, excited that he got it right.  
At that, all the other players on the team began screaming, "Come on coach, give him another chance!"

One day, at a local restaurant, a woman suddenly called out, "My son's choking! He swallowed a quarter! Help! Please, anyone! Help!"  
A man from a nearby table stood up and announced that he was quite experienced at this sort of thing. He stepped over with almost no look of concern, wrapped his hands around the boy's gonads and squeezed. Out popped the quarter.  
The man then went back to his table as though nothing had happened.  
"Thank you so much!" the mother cried. "Are you a paramedic?"  
"No," replied the man, "I work for the IRS."

A golfer stood over his tee shot for what seemed an eternity. Looking up, looking down, measuring the distance, figuring the wind direction and speed. Driving his partner nuts.  
Finally his exasperated partner says, "What's taking so long?"  
Hit the blasted ball!"  
The guy answers, "My wife is up there watching me from the clubhouse. I want to make this a perfect shot."  
To which his friend replied: "Forget it, you'll never hit her from here!"

## **THE WORLD'S THINNEST BOOKS**

**10. THE WILD YEARS - by Al Gore**

**9. AMERICA'S MOST POPULAR LAWYERS**

**8. DETROIT - A TRAVEL GUIDE**

**7. DR. KEVORKIAN'S COLLECTION OF MOTIVATIONAL SPEECHES**

**6. EVERYTHING MEN KNOW ABOUT WOMEN**

**5. MIKE TYSON'S GUIDE TO DATING ETIQUETTE**

**4. SPOTTED OWL RECIPES - by the Sierra Club**

**3. THE AMISH PHONE DIRECTORY**

**2. MY PLAN TO FIND THE REAL KILLERS - by O. J. Simpson**

**1. MY BOOK OF MORALS - by Bill Clinton**

After she woke up, a woman told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a pearl necklace for Valentine's Day. What do you think it means?"  
"You'll know tonight," he said.  
That evening, the man came home with a small package and gave it to his wife.  
Delighted, she opened it—to find a book titled "The Meaning of Dreams."

Reaching the end of a job interview, the human resources person asked a young engineer fresh out of MIT what kind of a salary he was looking for.  
"In the neighborhood of \$140,000 a year, depending on the benefits package."  
"Well, what would you say to a package of 5-weeks vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, company matching retirement fund to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every 2 years...say, a red Corvette?"  
"Wow! Are you kidding?"  
"Yeah, but you started it."



# Storm survivors

*It happened during the first days of our 13th year living in the country.*

*Some people say that had nothing to do with it.*

*By Anita Evangelista*

First couple days of June, 1998, weather pretty good, a bit wetter than it is now. Clear day, clouds moving in during the afternoon. By suppertime, the sky was darkly overcast and a southwest wind drove hard cold rain ahead of it. The flock of Jacob sheep, white fleece speckled with black spots, crowded into the old barn, always knowledgeable about these things. If the hardy heirloom breed was concerned enough to leave the spring-thick pasture grass, then there was reason for us to be concerned, as well.

Nick and I did as we always do, when signs show the rough Ozarks hills are in for a blow: we walked the perimeter of the house and barns, looking for anything that could go wrong—a loose board to turn into a lethal kite, a piece of metal roofing tin beginning to bang itself free, livestock packing foolishly into corners to escape the howling wind. Soaked and saturated, we plodded around the buildings. The old two-story white farmhouse still looked solid and tightly packed, in spite of the peeling paint and rusting roof. It has held together through a century of storms, and we trust it to hold together through the one that's coming, as well.

Around the west side of the house, I see the heads of herb plants, waving and bending in the wind, barely marking the corners of my beloved

herb garden. The plants will probably lose a layer of leaves, but should come through okay. Here's a young yellow hen, her head poked underneath an old tree root, thinking she's hiding from the coming storm—we grab her, squawking and complaining, and tuck her under a coat sleeve until we can get her back to the barn. There's a lamb, standing forlorn and wetly droopy under a spreading old field oak, separated from the flock—we walk out into the storm's face,



*Two views of the giant oak tree that fell alongside the author's home in Missouri*

eating rain, to herd the bleating youngster back to her mam. Even the dogs have taken to their homes; not a one of them is willing to venture out to accompany us on this soggy ritual.

I cast a nervous eye at the propane tank, a mere 30 feet from the house. It is my secret fear that this tank will attract lightning some day, and blow our hilltop clean of buildings and life. I hardly even looked at the old red oak, a 100-foot tall sentinel in our front yard. Like our farmhouse, this massive tree has stood relentless through centuries of storms, ancient enough to have been planted by the hand of George Washington—had that worthy ever visited the Ozarks.

On the protected north-facing front porch, Nick and I skin off our rain slickers and wriggle out of water-logged boots. There's no point in taking these inside to create puddles there; we'll just leave them out here, hanging on coathooks, for when we survey the storm's aftermath in a couple hours. At least, that's what we thought.

Inside, the house still retains some of the day's usual warmth. We close the south-facing windows, trying to keep the battering rain from soaking any more of the flooring than it already has. Distant rumbles and closer intermittent flashes let us know that it is also time to unplug: appliances, computer, video, radios, everything that could be fried by a random jolt of current. Unplugging is our son's job, his acknowledged pre-storm work since he was barely a toddler...he's now 16. At the same time, with the tension borne of previous weather-encounters, our daughter puts a half-dozen flashlights and an equal number of emergency candles on the coffee table in the living room, and checks the rechargeable batteries just to be sure. She also clears a path to the steps leading to the storm cellar under the pantry. Up to this time, we have never used it to shelter from severe weather. In spite of her mount-

ing anxiety, we won't use it tonight, either. To use it, you see, is to admit that there is some real danger about.

Like typical storms in the Ozarks, the front comes in fast and furious. "Gully washer" is how old timers have referred to this weather. Trees offer up their leaves and their branches to the high winds, small unsuspecting animals are swept willy nilly into suddenly-violent creeks, rivers overwhelm their borders and haul large game fish downstream to newly scooped pools, ponds refill, and the grass gets another growth spurt. From start to finish, sometimes less than an hour elapses.

It is generally an hour in which you know, with the clarity that comes from pure visceral terror, that you are alive.

The storm begins to pound our house, rain crashing in heavy sheets against the walls, windows, metal roof—enough, at times, to nearly drown conversation. We've already abandoned the battery-radio...storm-static makes it unlistenable. The electric power, true to form, flickers and goes out. Now, we sit together, the four of us in one room, silent amid the din outdoors, and pretend to be absorbed in books or thoughts—not one of us willing to acknowledge our essential physical impotence before nature's violent power. As if by some unstated agreement, we act as though we can still the storm, by imagining it away—if we don't look at its fury, perhaps it really isn't there.

Suddenly, a new sound roars over the wind and rain—a rattling pelting against the south and west windows, loud and strong enough to threaten breaking the glass. Hail! Large stones, this time, like the big aggies kids use for marbles.

Now we are on our feet, flashlights in hand like ritual totems, protection from the mounting dark, from the anger of the storm. I head to the bathroom window, the one with the clearest south view. All I can see is the

white shroud of hail. All I can hear is the bang of it hitting the wall, inches away from me. I begin to think that visiting the storm cellar might be a good idea, then cast the thought from me. I would not think about the cellar again this night.

The curtain of hail breaks for a moment. The sight from my bathroom window is nearly beyond description—rain, hail, mixed and flying right and left simultaneously; the leafy branches of a young silver maple a dozen feet away making wide, hard circles; everything else—barns, pasture, woods, animals—lost in the green-grey shimmering light beyond. And the wind, not howling anymore, but hissing and sighing.

The white shroud closes; the abrupt bang of hail startles me back a step.

"The tree's down!" A shocked voice from the front of the house, one of the kids.

I move as if in a dream, that perceived slow underwater motion that belies the adrenaline flow that powers it. In the dining room, facing east, the window is completely obscured—leaves blacken all outside storm-light.

"What happened?"

"It's just a branch!"

"It's the oak!"

"The creeper vine fell off the wall!"

"No, it's one of the little poplars!"

Confusion. Disbelief...this isn't happening, can't be happening. How could the tree have fallen this way? The wind would have blown it toward the north, away from the house! The oak would crush our home, destroy the entire upper floor, tear the walls down to the ground if it fell.

"Check upstairs! See if any branches are poking through!" The kids dash up the steps, return in moments—no damage visible, no wet spots. Only leaves, blocking their windows, too.

"What kind of leaves?"

"Oak," the boy says.

"I told you we should have gone to the storm cellar," the girl says.

We all turn back to the leaf-colored window, the sense of awe arising unbidden—not even a pane of glass is damaged, not even a single hairline crack. Is that possible? No one had even heard the fall—no crunch of trunk snapping, no rending or tearing of bark or limbs. Just a rushing sound, a swishing noise, then a window full of leaves.

Minutes that seem like hours pass, and so does the brunt of the storm. On the front porch, shielded from the trailing rain squalls, Nick and I stare without comprehension: the giant old red oak is down. But, it's not merely toppled—it looks as though a giant hand has grasped it, given it a full three-quarter turn, then dropped it carefully next to the house. It has literally brushed the west side of our home with its leaves. That's all.

Of course, it's also utterly buried my entire herb garden, squashed our propane tank two feet deep into the damp earth, and left a gaping root-

ball-hole three feet in depth and ten feet across in the front yard.

But we are alive, unharmed, and too surprised to be afraid. That came later.



The ancient Celts believed that an oak in the door yard provided protection for the home. Certainly, the acorns could have fed pigs, cattle, and hungry residents—and the fallen old branch wood, used sparingly and carefully, could have made tools or warmed the hearth. This old red oak had been our protection for the preceding 12 years. Our first storm, a month after we moved in, the oak took a bolt of lightning, spraying bark and branchwood around the yard—it was the highest point on our hill; the next highest was our house. We felt that the ancient protection of oaks had been there for us.

The great, spreading, canopy of leaves kept the house significantly cooler than outside temperatures during the heat of summer, and gave the grass a respite from the glare of mid-summer sun. The children built a swing on one of the lower branches. It took another strike during our 9th year. Once, in a dream, I felt myself become a part of the old tree, looked out over the jagged wooded hills through leaf-green eyes, and felt terribly alone: all the other ancient oaks were gone.

So, our thirteenth year dawned. A storm passed through, as it had done for two centuries of the tree's life. This time, the wind moved in a tornadoic circle, plucked the old red oak from the ground, and let it go.

What strange motives move the forces of a storm? A few inches to one side, and branches as thick around as a burly man's torso would have been driven into our beds, into our kitchen, into our unresisting bodies.

Instead, the old oak protected us again, one last time—it's final action to spare our home from the disaster that could have been. Δ





## ***Earth-sheltered***

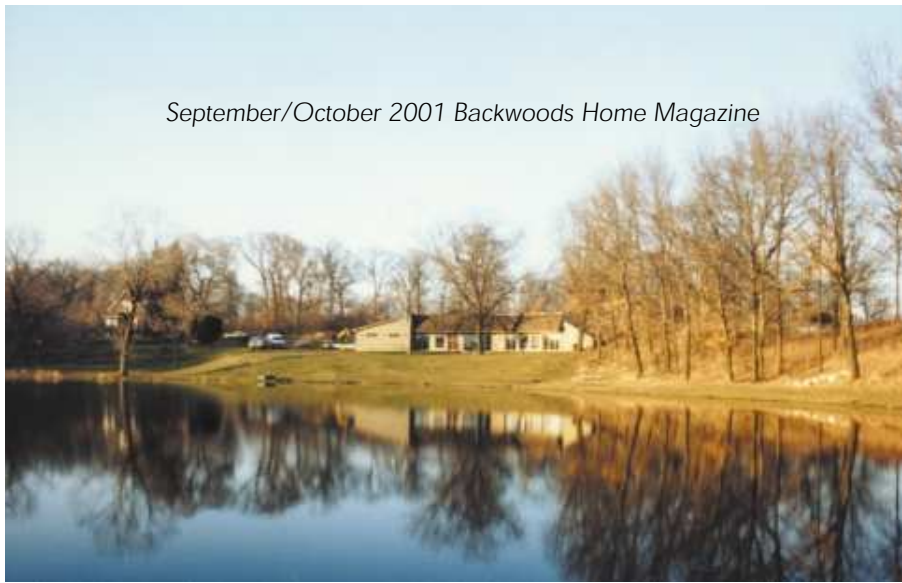
Plugging into the earth reduces heating and cooling







September/October 2001 *Backwoods Home Magazine*



## homes and structures

costs, utilizes steep terrain, and preserves silence and privacy, too.



*By Ruthanne and Marty Davis*

Imagine a home where, if the heating system goes out, you won't have to be concerned for your family's health. Where any change in indoor temperature, summer or winter, would literally be no more than a few degrees a month and would never drop below 50 degrees, even in the coldest environments. Or one that saves 60-85% on the costs of fossil fuels normally used in heating and

cooling. A home where pipes and other plumbing will never freeze, and you won't have to worry about your family, pets, or plants. A home that blends with the natural landscape, preserving the character of the land and promoting rather than disturbing wildlife. These are but a few of the attributes of an earth-sheltered home.

### The beginning

Our experiences with earth-sheltered homes began when Marty's dad,



Andy Davis, an electrician by trade, constructed an earth-sheltered home in response to skyrocketing costs to heat and cool their conventional home in Illinois due to the Arab oil embargo in the late 70's. Started in

1976 and completed a year later, Davis's Cave drew national attention for its energy efficiency. The "original cave" really looked like a cave and that was just the way Andy wanted it.

We started Davis Caves to continue Andy's work. While the majority of our business is residential, we have also built many earth-sheltered commercial buildings—offices, churches, and farrowing houses for the agricul-



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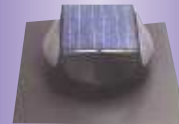
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tural market. We've even consulted internationally on many projects, including the construction of a renewable energy training school in Denmark.

There are many benefits to earth-sheltered homes. The roof is available for gardens or a yard. Sloping terrain that may otherwise be unused for conventional construction may be utilized and construction requirements minimize the use of wood. The concrete can be finished off to match any type of interior decor found in a conventional home.

## The structure

The entire superstructure is poured-in-place, reinforced concrete. The ceiling (or roof) is one solid, monolithic pour. It is supported by load-bearing concrete walls and concrete columns. The columns are located in corners of walls and closets so as to hide them. The footings are wide "floating footings" and can even be used in sand.

The ceiling height can range from 8 feet up to 16 feet for a one-level structure. Most people seem to like 10-12 feet. We have built many 2-story and even a few 3-story homes. The concrete roof is usually 10-12 inches thick, with 2 layers of reinforcing steel. After the 3-5 feet of earth cover is added, you can safely park cars, trucks, or tractors, etc. atop the structure.

## Heating and cooling

These homes have a minimum of 3 feet of earth cover. We do this in order to take advantage of the consistent temperature of the earth at the 8-foot depth which is approximately 55-58°F.

Virtually any sort of heating system can be used. Some sort of forced-air system is a good idea as it helps circulate the fresh air that is introduced into the home from the outside via an air-to-air heat exchanger. Still, the average heating/cooling cost will only

be about \$40 per month for an average size, earth-sheltered home in most areas.

All of the homes we build have a concrete floor but a conventional wood floor may be installed above it. Some customers want "stamped" or "stained" concrete floors, but most use carpet, tile, or wood over the concrete. We recommend an underlayment prior to any of these traditional coverings. This allows the concrete to breathe and to cushion the feet of the occupants.

## Natural lighting

Most folks are surprised by the amount of light that enters the home when it is (ideally) south-faced and uses an open floor plan. In the winter, light will enter all the way to the back wall of the home.

While we may can use traditional skylights for closed-plan designs, we prefer the tubular-reflective skylights. These bring in the most amount of natural sunlight while minimizing both maintenance and heat loss.

## Waterproofing

One should never build below the water table and you should provide for gravity-flow drainage. None of our homes rely upon or use sump pumps. Our concrete roofs are straight and conventional looking on the bottom, with a slight pitch on top to aid in water runoff. We use Bentonite waterproofing throughout, along with a 10 mil HDPE barrier.

The proper type *and* placement of insulation is also vital. We insulate on the outside with extruded polystyrene. We don't insulate on the inside of the concrete superstructure itself since we wish to fully utilize the thermal mass of the concrete to keep the inside temperature stable year-round.

Once the home is built, the savings are in the reduced need for maintenance and utilities since the earth-sheltered concept is more efficient. Of







course, this is dependent on how many openings there are and the efficiency of windows and doors.

## Construction

It takes about 10-12 weeks to build the superstructure. We allow, depending on the curing conditions, 1-4 weeks before we add the soil above the roof. All exposed footings are dug down below frostline. We avoid building on highly expansive clay. In extremely rocky areas, soil may need to be trucked in to cover the home and that could get expensive.

It's important in earth-sheltered structures to use good concrete, have all of the specifications engineered, install the proper air circulation system, and use the best waterproofing materials applied by professionals. The rest is straightforward.

A 2,000-square-foot home typically uses about 290 yards of concrete. With three feet of earth cover, most of the walls are exposed to the earth's constant temperature which keeps the

entire home from becoming either extremely hot or extremely cold.

The roof is designed to support a vertical load of 790 pounds per square foot, a 250% safety factor. This is much more than is needed to support the recommended minimum of 3 feet of earth cover. The walls are designed for a minimum of 650 pounds per square foot of lateral load, a 250% safety factor for *both* lateral pressure and the weight of the earth cover. It is important that the walls be heavily reinforced to eliminate any structural concerns.

An earth-sheltered home is the most elemental form of passive solar. The home *is* the storage, since it benefits directly from the natural geothermal heat of the earth. A 2,000-square-foot home has about 380 *tons* of thermal mass. Seasonally, then, it only varies a few degrees in temperature.

## Electrical wiring

Any electrical boxes or utility boxes that need to be in the concrete are



included in the superstructure. All wiring is in conduit (pipe) so it may be easily replaced. This hasn't happened in our 24-year experience with earth-sheltered homes. Still, this arrangement adds flexibility should you want to add anything.

We also position any boxes or conduit that is needed for ceiling lights, fans, and other loads in the concrete ceiling before we pour the concrete. Thus, there is no need to drop the ceiling to run wiring, plumbing, etc. You can plaster or finish directly to the concrete surface, and it appears the same as sheetrock or other coverings. The ceilings in all the homes pictured here are finished concrete.

### Safe and fire-resistant

The reinforced structure, along with the earth's natural cocoon, provides maximum protection from high winds, hail storms, tornados, and other natural disasters. It's also highly resistant to earthquake damage, even

if fairly close to the epicenter, because the amplitude of the vibration decreases with depth into the ground. Since the earth-sheltered home is not shaken solely through its foundation, its resistance to an earthquake is enhanced.

By using 2x4-inch metal studs and fire-resistant drywall, an earth-sheltered home becomes highly resistant to fire.

### Maintenance

Most people think of sidewalks, roads, and driveways when they think of concrete. Wide temperature variations and freeze-thaw cycles are the major causes of cracking in these concrete forms. But the temperature of the concrete in an earth-sheltered structure varies only a few degrees at any time during the year and is never exposed to these harsh conditions. Consequently, the structure will last many generations longer than a conventional home.

### Costs

An earth-sheltered home costs 20% more than a manufactured, modular, or stick home. However, it is comparable to the cost of a super-insulated, energy-efficient, above-ground home.

Since the finish work of an earth-sheltered home is relatively conventional, anyone can realize a 20% savings by finishing all or part of the home one's self. Or enlist the aid of local contractors.

[Davis Caves Earth Sheltered Homes, Ruthanne and Marty Davis, Box 69, Armington, IL 61721 Phone: (309) 392-2574, Fax: (309) 392-2578, e-mail/website: [www.daviscaves.com](http://www.daviscaves.com).

Marty and Ruthanne Davis sponsor EarthFest 2002, April 27, 2002, outside McLean, IL (between Chicago and St. Louis). The event features tours for the general public of 3-4 earth-sheltered homes in the area. They also offer *Earth Sheltered Designs* (\$17), a 90-page book that shows floor plans for 80 homes and businesses.] Δ



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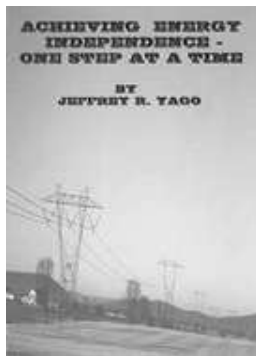


# Book review

## *Achieving Energy Independence - One Step at a Time*

Many of the books we have found on installing a solar electric power system appear to think the reader is an electrical engineer or physics professor. Author Jeff Yago, P.E., CEM, has made this book very different. You will not find lengthy chapters describing the theory of photovoltaics or complex solar calculations.

*Achieving Energy Independence - One Step at a Time* is truly a step-by-



step guide for the first time alternative power enthusiast.

It begins with chapters that describe our electric grid and how electricity is consumed in a typical home. Since using the correct lighting and appliances can drastically reduce the size and cost of any planned solar or backup power system, most of the first half of this book helps the reader determine which appliances and lights will work best for their own system and which should be replaced. The appendix includes an up-to-date list of energy usage figures for most appliances and office equipment.

The book then describes the different system types including solar, wind, battery, and generator based designs, so you can decide which one might fit your needs. He starts with a basic battery based system for a remote off grid cabin, and he used lots of photos and wiring diagrams for actual installations.

The book also shows you wiring modifications you can make to existing electrical systems that will keep your home or office equipment and lights operating through any power outage.

It includes detailed wiring diagrams, wire sizing tables, and equipment recommendations for installing emergency generators, photovoltaic solar arrays, battery bank, and power inverters.

It contains an extensive review of new lighting technologies and the lighting fixtures that work best with backup power systems.

The final chapters help the reader select their components including wiring, batteries, fuses, circuit breakers, inverters, generators, and closes with a discussion on lifestyle changes once you are no longer dependent on the utility grid.

The book is used as a teaching tool by the Maryland-DC-Virginia Solar Energy Industries Association when teaching homeowners or training electricians and electrical contractors who are new to alternative energy.

It's paperback, 190 pages long, and published by Dunimis Technology. The book has been a best seller on Amazon.com for \$33.45 (including shipping), but *Backwoods Home Magazine* is selling it for \$28 (including shipping). (see page 94 to order, item no. EN23.)

— Diamond Joe Wolcott Δ

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## This independent energy dealer says he's a "conservative's conservative"

Since 1996 Roy Butler has been the owner of Four Winds Renewable Energy Company, a family owned and operated independent energy company located on a windy 70-acre hilltop site in the Southern Finger Lakes Region of New York State.

In 1997 Butler took both his home and business off the grid, choosing to generate all of his electricity with a hybrid wind, solar, genset power system.

"We quickly learned the value of every watt," he said. "By combining the use of energy efficient appliances with a conservation-oriented lifestyle, we were able to reduce our daily power usage from 33 kilowatt hours to 6. That's key to the successful use of alternative energy.

By reducing our reliance on electricity, we were able to live quite

comfortably with a much smaller power system than we originally thought possible. We've recently added a 512-watt UniSolar solar array and are nearing our goal: to completely eliminate the need for our generator."

Butler started his business because of the independence it allowed him, plus he was "...tired of paying someone else for my energy and decided to take control of it." He said, "Most of my customers are of the same mindset: very independent people who want to take back some control of their lives."

Four Winds is involved in the sale of and installation of all sorts of alternative energy products for wind, solar, and hydropower generation as well as backup generator systems. Whenever possible, he supports "sweat equity," i.e., he encourages his customers to actively participate in both the planning and installation process.

"This not only reduces the



*Denis Oliver, Dave Cain, and Roy Butler in front of 1280-watt solar array next to a home in Georgia.*

*Four Winds designed and installed the system.*

installation costs, but helps the owner better understand the systems' installation and operation."

Butler calls himself a "conservative's conservative" and is a firm believer in the *Constitution*, particularly the *2nd Amendment*. He believes the biggest reason for the loss of independence in this country is apathy—people willing to let someone else do things for them.

He says he recently voted for Bush. It was the first time he had voted since voting for Ford in 1976. He said he had to vote for Bush because he "couldn't stand having anything to do with any of the Clinton-Gore regime. I dislike voting for the lesser of two evils but that was basically what I was doing."

Four Winds offers many levels of service, from the design and installation of complete turnkey power systems to providing the do-it-yourselfer with the proper components.

You can write for a free literature package at 8902 Rt. 46, Arkport, NY 14807 or call 607-324-9747. Their website, which Roy calls a work in progress, can be found at [www.fourwinds-energy.com](http://www.fourwinds-energy.com), and he can be reached by e-mail: [roy@fourwinds-energy.com](mailto:roy@fourwinds-energy.com). Δ



# Letters

Send your letters to:  
Backwoods Home Magazine  
P.O. Box 712  
Gold Beach, OR 97444

(Dear Readers - Thank you for writing to Backwoods Home Magazine. The opinions and suggestions we receive from our readers are very important to us. We regret that we are no longer able to print or individually respond to every letter received due to the volume. We do read every letter received, and pass them along to the editor or writer concerned. We print a selection from our mail that best represents the views and concerns of our readers.  
— The Editors)

## American Survival Guide readers respond

*Just got my first issue of BWH, thanks...for coming to the rescue. I couldn't figure out just what had happened at ASG. I was beginning to wonder if they had lost their collective minds. After a couple of issues of SRJ, I was ready to puke. The last issue sat collecting dust before I round filed it. To read it would have just reminded me how good they were as ASG and how out of touch they had become as SRJ.*

*I was in the process of looking for another publication to subscribe to when the July/August issue of BHM came in the mail. Read it from cover to cover and loved it.*

*Keep your powder dry.*

Judy Cisney  
jcis50@hotmail.com

*First off, I would like to thank the powers that be for the events that took place which led my former SRJ subscription to your fine magazine. Although I certainly do not agree with all you say, I find the clear opinions and ideas most enlightening and helpful. As we plummet into the chasm of the "me generation" and its ultimate anarchical society, it is good to hear that not everyone agrees with what's happening, and some have the b\*lls to say so.*

midprops@execpc.com

*Thank you for taking over the ASG subscriber's list. I wasn't going to renew it anyway. The reason I was still subscribed to it is that I am an OTR truck driver and my wife takes care of the subscriptions so when the notice came she automatically sent a check. I told her after the fact that I didn't want it but it was too late.*

*After they switched to the PC emasculated SRJ I wanted nothing to do with them. I'm 100% sure that's why they went down the drain. I missed Mr. Kastler and Benson's articles and gun/freedom related issues. Believe me I know what I'm taking about when I mention "freedom."*

*I was born and lived the first 28 years of my life behind the Iron Curtain and I've been watching de-javu here for the last almost 20 years. Yeah, I'm familiar with your magazine and I was going to subscribe to it anyway. I'm also familiar with Mr. Ayoob's articles and stand on the "GUN" issue and have a deep admiration for the man. I wish more and more cops would share his views but this "new breed" looks at it as a paycheck and are ready to do everything to defend the "system", not the constitution. . .*

*Dave, I totally agree with your last editorial, word by word. Simply you wrote what I thought.*

*Keep up the good work and as my subscription will get closer to expiration, you have my guarantee for the renewal of BHM.*

Paul Csurka, Lakeside, AZ

*I was surprised when the latest edition of your magazine arrived at my home. At first I thought it was one of the many unsolicited items that come to anyone on a mailing list, but as I read the first pages I learned the connection with ASG. I am glad that you*

*are supporting former ASG subscribers with your magazine and think it's a great marketing strategy. Frankly, I had decided not to renew my subscription to ASG because I no longer felt the magazine had anything to offer me. I would like to share with you the reason why I believe ASG failed in hopes that it will prevent similar problems with other organizations.*

*A couple of years ago, right after the name switch to Self Reliance Journal, I spoke with Jim Benson the former editor of ASG, at the Shooting, Hunting, Outdoor Sports Trade show (SHOT). I approached his booth and asked what was the deal with ASG, and why were they publishing articles about fruit smoothies and knitting. Jim explained that the owner of the company had recently died and his widow had taken over the company. Furthermore, he went on to tell me that, "she didn't like the militant tone of the magazine and since she was a Clinton supporter, she didn't care for the anti-Clinton articles." Benson said he was sorry that I was unhappy with the magazine and hoped things would get better.*

*Month after month I found myself let down by SRJ/ASG and finally I said, "enough is enough," and decided I would not renew my nearly ten year old subscription. What happened to SRJ/ASG is what is happening to many organizations in America today, especially in politics. I see the Republican party portraying itself as the party of self reliance and conservatism. I guess that's true if you compare them to the Democrats, but it seems everyone in that party is so afraid to make waves that they pervert their values just to fit in. Just as SRJ/ASG abandoned its support base, so are the Republicans, and no organization can survive by doing this.*

*When we turn our backs on our values and beliefs in order to sneak in the shadows and avoid the arrows of our critics, we debase ourselves, our*

*credibility, and eventually lose our moral compass. I challenge anyone to name a pioneer or great leader who was not ridiculed, attacked or jailed by his or her peers. Think about it; Gandhi, Lincoln, Galileo, Columbus, Jesus Christ, the list is endless. It is impossible to stand for something without receiving persecution. This is as much a law of nature as is gravity. If we try to ignore the law of gravity we will die, so it is when we try to please everyone all the time. Once you deny your beliefs and abandon your morals you die spiritually and soon your hollow frame will follow. I'm sure that ASG felt they would find solace and acceptance among the shadow dwelling moderates and that somehow they would come to their aid and save their magazine, but ask yourself, "When have moderates ever come to the aid of anyone in a crisis?"*

*One of my mottos is, "Be Bold, and mighty forces will come to your aid!" People support the Bold because seeing a leader stand-up and say "follow me" inspires others to greatness. Visionaries see beyond the political correctness of their time and confidently stride towards that undiscovered country where they'll be acknowledged for their wisdom. I encourage you to Be Bold in all you do, ignore the Naysayers and find joy in the attacks of your enemies. After all, it's usually a good sign when your enemies hate and fear you.*

*I wish you the best of luck and hope in BHM I'll find the backbone ASG abandoned.*

John J. Carpenter  
CarpenterJJ@worldkitchen.com

*Yesterday I got my first issue (#70) of BHM, resulting from the defunked ASG/SRJ. While ASG/SRJ had become a disappointment, it was still somewhat informative. BHM's ads (in ASG) never lured me to subscribe, but I'm truly impressed and pleased*

*immensely with BHM now that I've begun to read it.*

John Smith, Hallsville, MO

*I am one of the Self Reliance Journal subscribers that you recently acquired for \$1.00 on the first day and \$60,000 over the next six months in operational costs. The July/August issue of Backwoods Home Magazine that you sent was wonderful! It was just what I had been looking for when I originally subscribed to the old American Survival Guide.*

*I am enclosing a check to cover a three year subscription to BHM plus an extra \$3.00 to cover the operational costs when you picked up with my ASG subscription.*

John Hollis, Williamsburg, VA

*When my subscription to American Survival Guide was terminated, your magazine was shipped to me as a substitute. I really enjoyed reading BHM (much more than American Survival Guide).*

John Thomas  
jntmjt1@mindspring.com

*I find your magazine to be a tell it like it is publication. More interesting than the survival magazine you replaced. I assume you will send me a renewal notice at the appropriate time. Meanwhile I am sending a check for your offer of 15 back issues for \$29.95. Thanks for a great read.*

Bernard Borofka, Brill, WI

*Thank you for taking my ASG subscription over. I didn't know what happened, but wasn't getting my magazine. I've never heard of yours, but like this one (#70).*

Gary Smith, Hesperia, CA

*I am one of the new subscribers from American Survival Guide. Thank you so much for sending me your magazine. It's great. I ordered the selected issues special, which*

*arrived this past week, and I can't stop reading.*

Rick Murphy, Boise, ID

The "15 Selected Issues" special (page 65) is probably one of the best ways for former ASG subscribers to find out what BHM is all about. It's inexpensive and covers the broad range of topics we tackle. — Dave

*My subscription to ASG/SRJ expired shortly before BHM took over. I had decided to not renew even though I did generally like the magazine. Simply put BHM does it better. The one area I do sorely miss is the question and answer section in the beginning of each SRJ....I would also like to thank you for taking over the ASG/SRJ subscriptions. Although I did not benefit, so many have and I believe the work you are publishing needs to be read by as many people as possible.*

RiverVan@bluefrognet.net

*I received my last copy of the new style ASG (or Self Reliance Journal) in May of 2001...I was not informed of the fact that they ceased to publish by SRJ/ASG, even though I have been a subscriber for over 10 plus years. Not until I received my first copy of Backwoods Home Magazine was I able to learn what exactly happened. I felt let down, as a loyal subscriber. I feel that I should have been made more aware of what was going on by the staff of ASG (or at least some small notice in the May issue.)*

*I will likely extend my subscription to BHM, as I find that the values expressed are similar to my own (aside from the fact that I live in a rather rural area of Virginia).*

E.C. MacFarland, King William, VA

## McVeigh commentary

*I have recently discovered the Backwoods Home Magazine, and have read some of your letters and*

*the Timothy McVeigh letter. . . Although I don't condone the bombing, and believe it was wrong, it did change the direction the government was taking (or maybe just a change in speed instead of a change in direction) in relation to using military or military-style forces against the civilian population on American soil. I believe this change was necessary, due to the fact that no one has yet been punished for what happened at Waco or Ruby Ridge. . .*

*Even though I don't trust and even fear the government, my views about the Oklahoma City bombing took many years to develop. Personally, I wish McVeigh had used some peaceful means to change the direction of the government instead of exacting revenge, but I believe that it definitely had a desired effect in telling the government that if they start a war against the citizens of this country, they will pay a fearful price and ultimately will collapse from the lack of legitimacy.*

Don Wilson, dw50922@alltel.net

*I read your article and I must say I was stunned. Not by your topic but the fact that you were willing to address it. It takes a lot of courage to speak out on such a sensitive subject.*

*The reason most people will not speak out is because they fear being labeled. I try to teach my children to study history with an open mind because so much of our history is told by the victors. My favorite is telling them what is the difference between a campaign and a massacre. In our history books if our military did it we call it a campaign against the Indians. If the Indians did it we called it a massacre . . .*

Martin Shaffer  
MartiShaffer@aol.com

*Couldn't agree more with your view regarding Tim McVeigh in #70. Keep telling it like it is.*

Jim Phillips, Immokalee, FL

*. . . You said it perfectly and I agree 100%. One bright spot in a related case is that I understand that the court has cleared the way for the gestapo agent who murdered Vicki Weaver. . .*

Roy Denney, San Martin, CA

*Since that court decision, Utah authorities said they will not prosecute Lon Horiuchi, the FBI agent who killed Vicki Weaver. — Dave*

*Thanks again for a great read, although a lot in this last issue was disturbing.*

*I wish with all my heart Tim McVeigh did not do what he did. For the people in the federal building, for McVeigh's family and for McVeigh himself. I don't promote violence, however, have you heard the saying one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter? As an example I would like to use Menachem Begin who, if I have my history straight, was instrumental in blowing up the King David Hotel during the British occupation of Palestine. To me Begin, Moshe Dayan, David Ben Gurion and the rest were heroic freedom fighters the likes of which we will probably never see again. There are, however, many people who do not agree with me on this.*

*My personal dilemma with McVeigh was I understood why he acted on his beliefs and I didn't feel he was evil incarnate which is how the news media portrayed him. But I felt I had to be careful who knew I felt this way.*

*Reading JFK's executive orders sent chills through me especially the part of relocating the population. The government will not find it easy to round up people living scattered in the mountains as I and my few neighbors do. These people are the remnants of what used to be in stubborn self-reliant Vermont. My beloved Vermont is going down the tube with the rest of the liberal East. . .*

*Thank you for letting me know I am not alone in my independent think-*

*ing—that it is not me who is crazy but the rest of them.*

Kathryn Venable  
Montgomery Center, VT

## Solar commentary

*My view issue #69 was right on the mark. I don't envy you being in that den of true believers & useful idiots. But there are ways to have fun.*

*I'm also a Libertarian. In fact I must be a real one—nobody I've ever voted for has ever been elected. Though in the spirit of full disclosure I've contributed money to Ron Paul's campaign.*

*Whenever I talk to the useful idiots and work them into a frenzy by challenging most of what they say, here's some personal information I like to hit them with.*

*I built my own house. It's a geodesic dome. They use about ½ less material than a square house. Saving trees is nice, but I built it because I always liked them. My house is also stand alone solar powered. It wasn't the cheapest way to go, but when I move there permanently I'll never have another utility bill.*

*I have a 30 acre farm in Kentucky that I converted to organic. It only has 5 tillable acres so it makes more economic sense to grow for the high end of the market. Yes, including organic tobacco.*

*I also do my own reloading, so I recycle a lot of brass and plastic hulls. This is when the idiots' eyes stop focusing.*

*The conversations almost always end when I ask which of us is more earth friendly. Most of the idiots have never done anything but talk too much, sign petitions, recycle a few beer cans and vote Democratic.*

*So if it makes you feel any better I've managed to give a lot of them migraines over the last few years. I might have even made a few think.*

*Good magazine.*

Jo Le Blanc, Philadelphia, PA

*My husband and I have been reading your magazine for ten years. Thank you for the informative home-steading articles and lively political commentaries. You have a knack for stirring up people and making them think. Unfortunately, I think you were off-track in your May/June 2001 editorial on environmentalism. You confuse environmentalism the philosophy with environmentalism the political ideology.*

*Fifteen years ago I became a liberal and environmentalist. Gradually, I have shed some of my earlier liberalism, tempering compassion with common sense. I tend to vote Libertarian, support the 2nd Amendment, and oppose big government. However, I remain an unapologetic tree-hugger. Environmentalism is simply the belief that the Earth matters, and that, as the dominant species, we humans have a duty to protect and honor our planet.*

Faith Geisel, Conklin, MI

*We all—conservatives, libertarians, and liberals—believe the earth matters, but only environmental zealots have turned the subject into a cloak behind which they can hide their big government, socialist ideology. The earth matters to us, but socialism matters to them. — Dave*

*We really do appreciate your magazine and format and views. We don't have a computer so we couldn't keep up with your trek to the big solar energy fairs. Thank you for confirming our feelings that it is nauseating dealing with "greenies" when you need solar hardware. We know—we are all solar and wind driven.*

Bob & Debi Walker, Canon City, CO

*Thank you for the story on environmental ideology hurting the solar industry. I couldn't agree more. I have been interested in solar power ever since I was a young boy reading*

*Popular Mechanics and Popular Science.*

*I have been fortunate enough to marry a woman who feels the same way I do. We are conservative people who want the independence of solar. In the end, our salaries today are paid by large corporations. We are saving the money paid to us by the corporations now to move and build an off grid home in the future.*

*The large power companies are essential to the United States. There is no way our country could have prospered so quickly without them. If any nation can create more power and pump and refine more oil safely and cleanly, it is the United States.*

*I try to spend time every week talking to friends about efficient building systems, better appliances, and alternative energy. I always try to avoid the environmentalist angle because I do not believe it. If my friends comment that I am an environmentalist, I always define exactly what that term means to me. I explain the difference between environmentally conscious, and radical environmentalism.*

*Again, thank you for the article. It reflects our views perfectly,*

Dean A. Bakum

Dean\_Bakum/infrastructure.infra-  
structure@infrainc.com

*I just purchased your magazine (May/June) and read my first article. It was My View by Dave Duffy. I can only say thank you!*

*I was beginning to believe that I was the only conservative who also believes in solar energy. Your article was a good dose of common sense. You are correct. The solar energy folks could sell their product a lot easier if they would dump their ideology in the nearest trash can and simply tell me how their product could enhance my life and pocketbook. Keep up the good work and add my name to your subscription list.*

Donald Knicely  
dknicely1@hotmail.com

## **Solar industry commentary/American Survival Guide/Best places to live**

*The editorial on page 7 of issue #69 was great! I agree 100%...I've been interested in alternative sources of energy since my teen years when I helped my dad and grandfathers bust up dead trees for firewood. I was fond of the Mother Earth News, but became disillusioned with them as they seemed to go "left," while I went "right." The final straw was a full page ad by the Sierra Club.*

*Sorry to hear of the demise of American Survival Guide/Self Reliance Journal. Interesting publication. In fact, they turned me on to BHM!*

*I would like to see an article or preferably a series of articles on the "best places to live an independent, self-reliant, less hectic lifestyle." Which states would be most hospitable to traditional minded folks who believe in common law, the Constitution and their biblical foundations?*

*What states have the least amount of zoning restrictions that would interfere with alternative energy, innovative construction types etc.?...Which states have the lowest property taxes? Which states have low or no income tax etc.? What about climate conditions, temperature averages and extremes, humidity, precipitation amounts, growing seasons in different areas of a state etc.?...Which states have the least restrictive firearms laws and carry policies? Hunting & fishing license costs? Vehicle registration fees? (Outrageous in Pennsylvania)*

*Such information would be of great interest to many of your readers.*

*Thanks for the excellent magazine.*

D. Baublitz, Spring Grove, PA

*My family just returned from a 5-week, 25-state tour of America, and we found many good places to live.*



We're thinking of instituting a series in *BHM* called "Small town America" and report on the very things you are interested in, plus more. — Dave

## Dictatorship series

*I must congratulate you and your cohorts on speaking out concerning the Presidential Executive Orders and the direction of our country. It is refreshing to know there are still people who will print the truth of what is actually going on in this country without fear of losing advertising.*

Rick Kepple, Buckhorn, MO

*I am most grateful to have stumbled upon your website a little over a year ago. I immediately requested a subscription to your magazine. I have been reading John Silveira's series and I have become more and more dumbfounded by the way our federal government is trampling rough-shod over our Constitution and Bill of Rights. With the exception of exercising one's right to vote, what can the average Joe/Joanne Citizen do to tighten the reign on our government? How do "we the people" get back our Constitution and Bill of Rights?*

*I've paid enough taxes and the government has told me what I can and cannot do for far too long.*

*Thank you and consider me to be a lifelong subscriber to Backwoods Home Magazine.*

Richard Gallant, North Attleboro, MA

*You have changed my position on government, politics, and guns. And that wasn't easy. I love the series "The coming American dictatorship." Thanks for helping to keep my dream alive.*

Mary Ruth Dilling  
countrymom7@pfash.com

*I recently joined the American Civil Liberties Union, my decision to join was deeply influenced by the articles I've been reading on "The coming American dictatorship." The very day*

*that I sent in my membership check, I watched the evening news on our rural satellite TV station (privately and publicly funded.) A lead story was about a group of peaceful protesters (mostly from religious groups) demonstrating on the steps of a federal (i.e., public) building. They were singing, waving signs, chanting and generally exercising their right of freedom of speech. They were not causing a disturbance (unless they were singing off-key), or blocking the entrance to the building. They were ordered to disperse and when they refused, they were arrested. I was appalled. At no time during the newscast did the reporters state that these protesters were being denied their rights.*

*I am a member of the National Rifle Association, National Organization for Women, The League of Conservation Voters, The Wildlife Society and The Audobon Society (among others). Let me tell you that this bird watching gun-toting feminist environmentalist hunter is going to continue to exercise her rights and her vote from the top of her lungs! (I wonder how the government catalogs me on their lists?)*

Mrs. Katherine McLaughlin  
Chenega Bay, AK

*I very much enjoyed your excellent article in the March/April issue concerning the evils of the American bureaucracy. However, though several remedies were presented, there was little discussion as to how they are to be implemented. Realistically, I have no reason to anticipate a major turnaround in my lifetime.*

*Our Constitution was a very unique event in human history, where a group of self-reliant, hard working and freedom loving individuals were able to set out with a clean sheet of paper to form a government. Though this spirit is still alive within many of us, politically speaking we are but a "voice in the wilderness." The last*

*election campaign seemed, more than anything, to be a contest as to who could offer the biggest government pork barrel. And demographic trends are not on our side.*

*Though I have and will continue to support libertarian causes, my personal strategy is to live a simple, close to nature lifestyle, and avoid government in every way possible.*

Gustav Dreier, Jefferson, NY

## Guns

*The current issue of Backwoods Home Magazine, (Issue #70) page 16, column 2, last paragraph states "In 2003, the "Crime Law" that banned ownership of certain semiautomatic firearms and of magazines that held more than 10 cartridges will "sunset." Could you please explain this law and what it entails as I am unfamiliar with it. Is the law going to be repealed or does it expire in 2003? What semiautomatic weapons fall under this category? Thank you so much.*

Ted Crawford, Andrews, NC

*As I understand it, the Brady Bill had a 10 year shelf-life. It "sunssets" in 2003. If it is not "revived," the ban on manufacture of new magazines of greater than 10 round capacity ends.*

— Mas Ayoob

*I've been buying BHM at a bookstore for years, finally subscribed about two years ago. Thanks for the great publication. I hope you keep it coming for years! I appreciate the fact you haven't bowed down to the "god of political correctness." You know, the one that keeps the whole left wing in the dark.*

*I'm really writing to blow off a little steam. I had borrowed a vehicle for the weekend, which had a hopeless array of buttons on the dashboard. I took off without looking at what station the radio was tuned to. Turned out, it was (yuk) public radio. Unable to change stations while driving, I*

was stuck listening to a "family program" bashing the NRA, and gun owners in general. They basically were trying to say that any family with children and guns in the house **will** eventually have a tragic result.

Excuse me?! We had over 40 guns in the house (my dad was a collector) and 9 kids when I was young. We all were taught at a young age how to use them, but most of all, to **RESPECT** them. (We're all still alive!) We never touched them when the folks weren't home. Because our parents took the time to teach us.

Seems to me that kids these days don't have much of a respect for anything, guns included, because the parents don't take the time to sit with them and teach them. Lots of folks have no idea what is even going on in their kids lives, let alone "heads." . . .

Cheryl Schultz, Bowler, WI

I have recently purchased a Taurus PT140 for home defense and for carry when Michigan's new law goes into effect. I would like to know if you have any knowledge or experience with the gun as far as features, shootability, reliability, etc.

Paul Ferguson, Jackson, MI

Personally, the PT-99 style guns are my preference in the Taurus auto line.

— Mas Ayoob

## Claire Wolfe

In the "great" city of New York it is illegal for anyone to talk to another person or look anywhere other than at the door while riding on an elevator. How many criminals there must be in New York, heck, there are movies and TV shows that depict this type of scurrilous, criminal behavior. Good website; it's nice to see Claire Wolfe back.

Robert Sala, drummer@eclipse.net

## Applause

Beautiful magazine. This is my roots and at heart, my way of life. It's

sad that so many people can't see what's going on around them. Your magazine gives them a chance to do something about their own situation. You can do no more.

Keep your powder and lighter dry and continue your way of publishing.

Tim Howard, Crestview, FL

Just a note to let you know you all are doing a great job at BHM. Dave's McVeigh editorial is right on. I always look forward to what Ayoob and Jackie have to say. Those two have really got it together. Claire Wolfe, you keep writing and I'll keep reading.

Reggie Kirby, Atlanta, IL

. . . your magazine always ends up in the "reading room" where it really gets read...when I discovered your web page address you probably mentioned it before...but I didn't catch it ...well you should post this address in large red letters (www.backwoodshome.com) somewhere in the magazine...for it is really good...you will be part of my every morning "catch up" along with the Drudge Report, Sierra News Ranch and World Net Daily.

Kent Cartwright  
mtnmannv2@juno.com

Thank you for the great articles and columns on subjects like Waco, Ruby Ridge, and Timothy McVeigh. The truth is not often popular with the masses, but it still needs to be told and heard.

I am many things; a decorated Viet Nam Vet and Combat Tracker, a 50 year old factory worker, and in my own small way, a freedom fighter. I am one of the many Libertarian activists that promote individual freedom. Because of your reference to C.A.T.O. institute, I am sure you are well aware of my beliefs. I will promote your magazine to my Libertarian friends. Libertarians are well aware of the abuses of our immoral, corrupt and hypocritical

leaders. Of ten thousand random people on the street, few if any would have much real knowledge about the Weaver family murders, or the Waco murders, or the hundreds of murders and thousands of lives destroyed by our government each year. Yet, if by chance you talked to twenty Libertarians, you would be surprised how much they knew about these events, and how outraged they were at the low regard our politicians have for human life, or individual liberty.

Thank you again Mr. Duffy!

Kenneth L. Proctor  
tracker@ia4u.net

Your magazine is defective. The back cover is entirely too close to the front cover. Keep up the good work.

Jerry Boyd  
qed@tignetnet.missouri.org

Thanks for putting out the best magazine of its kind this 73 year old has ever read. About time some one started to talk American.

Ole Grandpappy  
gailjames53@hotmail.com

I feel compelled to tell you and the staff that you do a great job. After having received many issues I can still say that I wait with anticipation for each new issue. You've no doubt heard this many times, but to me BHM stands out even though you are low key. I subscribe to several magazines per month trying to stay on top of my field (techno geek). BHM I subscribe to for myself and it's the only magazine that I receive that is fresh and meaningful. I laugh at most new trends because I know that they won't be around very long. You and the crew give useful info and I agree with your sometimes "outspoken" philosophies.

Keep up the good work and tell everyone thanks for me.

Martin Moninger  
dragonskeep@alltel.net

*Recently, I came across a copy of your magazine and immediately felt as if I belonged to your family of readers. I had always thought there were other folk "out there" who shared the thoughts and feelings I've had, but were unable to connect with them. Your BHM did that for me. As a builder-designer, writer, and holder of a Federal Firearms license, I sensed with the turning of each page a kindred relationship with those folk who embalmed their thoughts on your pages with their words. I particularly like the "CAD," (The coming American dictatorship) article by John Silveira, and the Ayoob on guns. These gentlemen are truly versed on their subjects and impart their knowledge in an easy to understand manner. No headaches with their writing. It's as clear as a "country creek!"*

R.C. Gentry, Port Charlotte, FL

*This is the magazine that I've been looking for. The political slant of my former self-reliance magazine chased me away. I am pleased to patronize you and your advertisers. I am just thrilled to find others with ideas similar to mine. Good job.*

Ruth Cowden, Ogilvie, MN

*We were shopping for the latest issue of Mother Earth News when we came across Backwoods Home Magazine. After flipping through Backwoods Home we dropped MEN like a hot potato. We are so happy to have found a self-reliant living mag that supports our political views.*

Bill & Wendy Fairfull, Charleston, SC

*I have been talking to my daughter about your magazine. She has three children. One is 16 yrs and need to know about Mac & Duffy's civic lessons. I hope you are going to print the series in a special packet. I have other grandchildren who need to know the truth also. The 12 yr old is into camping & this is just what he needs. The 10 yr old can learn so much from Jackie's writings. The*

*daughter would like Jackie's articles. She is into canning & growing a garden. What a wonderful magazine! Something for everyone.*

Beatrice Madden, Kingston, WA

*I applaud Dave & staff on their unwavering commitment to the principals & ideals that started the magazine on their road to success. I have no fear that Dave would ever go "PC." He's too Irish stubborn for that. I hope your marketing strategy of acquiring American Survival works out. I'm sure it will. Good luck.*

Mark Broshar, Plainfield, WI

*Your joke page alone is worth the renewal. We love it.*

James Mundy, Jr., Tillamook, OR

*I really enjoy your magazine very much. It really gets to the basics on quite a lot of know how. The recipes are great. My grandkids get quite a chuckle from the jokes. I catch my wife sneaking a few minutes reading on the baking and cooking articles.*

Gerald Willis, Sr., Dryden, NY

*Your magazine is the "ray of hope" so many of us need! Thank you. May God guide you and protect you all the days of your lives.*

Elizabeth Gallant, Catonsville, MD

*I often (usually) disagree with your politics, but I usually read your magazine anyways, for two reasons. First, there's a lot of good information and I appreciate the opportunity to learn. Second, in reading your political views I find that I often take time to reevaluate my own views and determine whether they are heartfelt beliefs or surface attitudes. You do keep me on my toes!*

Aileen Fitzgerald  
aileen1704@yahoo.com

*Excellent magazine! I truly look forward to the refreshing viewpoint that your unique publication has. Thank you for being a point of light*

*in an otherwise dark sea of periodical crap.*

R.E. Armour, Luck, WI

*We did it! After years of dreaming, we finally made our move off the grid! We sold our house and had just enough proceeds to pay cash for 35 acres in Colorado. We plan to build an earthship and use solar and wind power. Since that will take us a few years to complete, our summer goal is to set up a straw bale cabin we can live in for a few years while working on the earthship, and after that the cabin can become a guest house or barn. We built a straw bale studio last summer as an experiment, and were excited with how quickly it went up.*

*Thanks to your magazine for providing the inspiration, information, and how-to's. I don't usually like reading political editorials, but David Duffy & John Silveira really do their homework and present their cases in a clear logical manner without the ranting that has turned me off to other political writing. I didn't know I was a Libertarian until I subscribed! I especially like your articles on gardening and alternative building. And the letter and articles by other people who have "made the move" are very inspiring.*

Sybil Gaylord, Boulder, CO

*Just a short note to say thanks. You and the staff and writers have a truly wonderful magazine. Magazine just doesn't do it justice. It is better than that. Shouldn't even be lumped in the same category! I enjoy the articles greatly. But the editorials, and the pieces on our government really make me think. Hard. About who we are, where we are, and sadly, where we are headed. But we all need to think more about these things. Maybe then we wouldn't be so complacent. Thanks again for an outstanding job.*

Bob Gresham  
bobgresh@rise.com.net

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# The last word

## Man vs. the machine

About 10 years ago, I was living in southern California and I was summoned for jury duty. I was glad to be called. I've always liked the concept of jury duty in which we, as private citizens, stand between the state and my fellow citizens.

I can't remember the exact sequence of events that day but, as I recall, we assembled in the jury waiting room at the courthouse, me and a bunch of strangers. We had to fill out a long questionnaire, then our names were called, alphabetically, from a list to make sure we were all there. Then we waited. But not for long. A group of names was called. Mine was on it. We went to a courtroom where we were told we were going to be questioned, to possibly hear a Driving Under the Influence case. Twelve of us were called to the jury box and the judge asked us each, in turn, to state our names and tell him a little about ourselves. As each of us finished introducing ourselves, he asked, "If the prosecution proves its case, will you render a verdict of 'guilty' even if you disagree with the law?"

One by one the five jurors ahead of me each said he or she would bring a verdict of guilty under such circumstances, even if he disagreed with the law. But when it got to me I said, "Of course not." The judge didn't miss a beat and went on to ask each of the other jurors the same questions.

Then the process called *voir dire*, during which the prosecutor and the defense attorney challenge jurors, began. One by one the jurors before me were questioned.

When it got to me the prosecutor asked, "Mr. Silveira, can you give me an instance where you would not be able to bring a verdict of guilty if the Breathalyzer test should show the defendant was over the legal limit?"

I said I could, but I thought a second to collect my thoughts. I was very nervous. Then I said, "First, let me say, I don't want to condone drunk driving." I paused, then I continued, "Suppose a guy leaves a bar with three of his friends. The three friends are drunk. The guy who's going to drive is, as far as he's concerned, okay. He drives awhile and a cop pulls in behind him and follows him a few miles. Then the cop pulls him over. He walks up to the window and asks, 'Sir, do you know why I pulled you over?'"

"The guy says, 'No.' The cop says, 'One of your tail lights is out.' The guy says, 'Oh, I didn't know.' Then the cop notices that the passengers are drunk and he asks, 'Where are you coming from, sir?' The driver says, 'A bar.' 'Were you drinking, sir?' 'I had a couple of drinks, but I'm not drunk.' 'Would you mind taking a Breathalyzer test?' The guy says, 'Sure.'

"He takes the test and lo and behold, it shows the guy is over the limit. So, the cop arrests him.

"Now, here's my problem with that scenario: The guy left the bar not knowing he is drunk, according to the state. None of the three passengers know he is drunk, according to the state. The cop who pulled him over didn't know he was drunk. But a machine says he is. I wouldn't bring a verdict of guilty in a case like that. I would consider the results of the test if the cop had pulled the guy over because he was weaving, or had run a light, or had gotten into an accident. But I wouldn't let a machine determine guilt or innocence by itself, and it sounds like that's what you're asking me to do. If that's how we're going to determine guilt or innocence, by machines, when we ourselves don't even know we've broken the law, then maybe we don't need juries anymore. We can dispense with people in the loop and let machines determine whether we're guilty or innocent of anything."

There was a long pause and *voir dire* continued with the next few jurors.

A little later, the prosecutor said he would like juror six dismissed. That was me. I got up and left the courtroom and returned to the Jurors Waiting Room. I waited the rest of the day, had lunch, read, snoozed on the lawn outside, and talked with my fellow jurors. In the meantime, more prospective jurors were called to report to various courtrooms, including some of the people who had been called at various other times but hadn't been chosen to serve. I wasn't called again.

At the end of the day, we had to wait as a woman went through the roll call, alphabetically, to make sure no one left early. As we answered when our names were called, we were dismissed. She made it all the way through the list without calling my name. I went up to the lectern where she stood and I said, "My name wasn't called."

"See the woman at the window," she said and pointed.

I was a little confused, but I went to the window and told the woman behind the glass, "She didn't call my name."

She asked my last name. I spelled it. She looked through a thick sheaf of perhaps 200 papers on her desk. Then she turned and took a stack of perhaps three papers. She pulled one from there. "Okay," she said and checked my name off.

"Why was my sheet over there?" I asked.

She looked at me for several seconds without saying anything, then she said, "I don't know."

Of course, we both knew why it was there. She didn't look at me again. I left.

It was clear I had been removed from the pool early that morning and my paperwork was placed apart from the others. I wasn't compliant enough for the state. I was, in fact, what bureaucrats and politicians fear most: an authentic impartial juror, and a citizen who thinks for himself.

What the state wants are machines and people who think and are predictable like machines. But if this is how justice is to be dispensed in the United States, then God help us. Δ

— John Silveira